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AUGUST 1988

A MONTHLY REVIEW EDITED BY R. EMMETT TYRRELL, JR.

Our Silent Economic Boom

Morton Downey's Syndrome

Old Dirty Paws

Terence P. Jeffrey
on
Speaker Jim Wright

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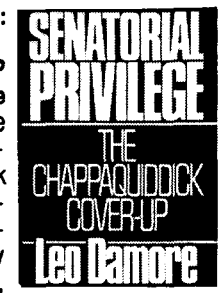

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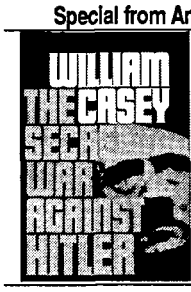

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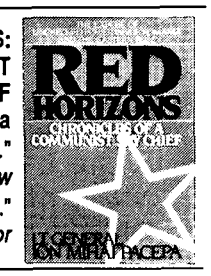

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THE CONTINUING CRISIS

•A very dry June simply evaporated, leaving many of the Republic's farmers looking like Ethiopian horticulturists. President Ronald Reagan returned from his triumphal Moscow summit elatedly displaying a cover of *Time* magazine autographed by his new friend, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev. Massachusetts Governor Mary Lou Dukakis solved her state's unforeseen budget crisis with a laconic tax increase. And in the small town of Aabenraa, Denmark, a small West German bridegroom was asked by officials to lower his pants that they might inspect his genitalia before officiating at his marriage. "We had to be sure," declared an aide to the town's mayor, because the young man "looked very feminine and was heavily made up." As our President is wont to say, "Trust but verify," or in the original, "Doveray no poveray."

•Certain of the planet Earth's uncomfortable boils erupted painfully during the month—to be specific: South Africa, where there was another unauthorized strike and more anti-apartheid demonstrations; South Korea, where there were student protests; and Israel, where unrest continued on the West Bank. Yet in Nicaragua a bizarre serenity remained as the contras' supplies dwindled and talks between them and the Sandinistas ended in irreconcilable gibbering. How odd that only those boils that pain American interests continue to worsen during the renewal of U.S.-Soviet comity.

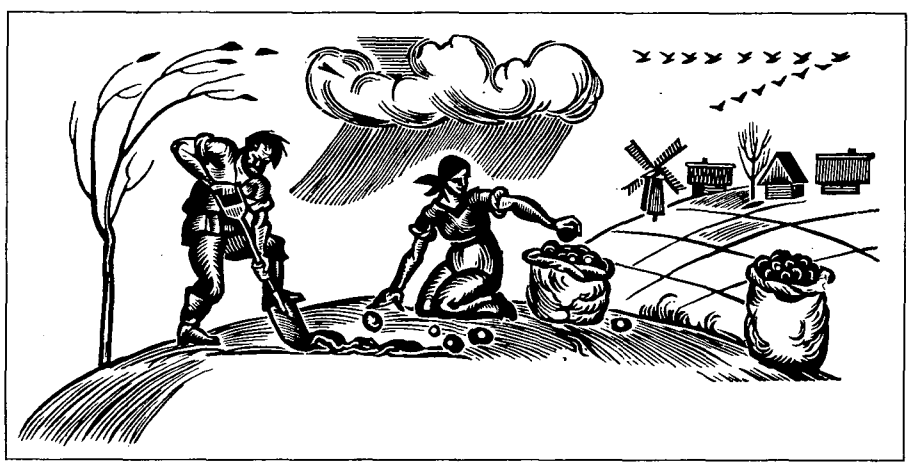
•It has happened again! In New Haven, Connecticut, mourners arrived at one of the Sisk brothers' funeral parlors to view the remains of Mr. Thomas P. Eagan and discovered that the body of Mr. William J. Gormley was resting in Mr. Eagan's coffin. Mr. Gormley is a fine looking man, but the mourners had come to see Mr. Eagan; and one can imagine their disappointment upon being notified that in a hospital mix-up Mr. Gormley was laid in Mr. Eagan's place and Mr. Eagan, alas, was irreparably cremated. Readers of this column know that such mix-ups take place frequently, owing to the deceased's inability to communicate effectively with hospital and mortuary personnel. Thus they are better prepared than, say, the readers of *Sports Illustrated* for funereal happenstance.

But forget not the plight of Mrs. Dorothy Coughlin, 67, who was importuned by Trans World Airlines to check her husband's ashes as common baggage rather than carry them aboard a Los Angeles-to-Boston flight in 1985. The ashes were lost, and now a federal judge has ruled that the airline is liable only for a $1250 settlement rather than the $78,000 that the bereaved Mrs. Coughlin sought. The Rev. Jesse Jackson continued to campaign, though after winning June 7 primaries in California and New Jersey Mrs. Dukakis has almost assured herself the Democratic presidential nomination, thus becoming the first lady of Greek extraction to win the once commanding though now largely ceremonial nomination—and Rev. Jackson's arsenious murmurings about his role on the 1988 Democratic ticket might again threaten to make the Democratic presidential nomination an even emptier title, though Washington pundits think otherwise.

•In Sonora, California, Assistant District Attorney Ned Lowenbach's First Amendment right to free expression has come under challenge from Mr. Clark Head, a lawyer who claims that he was impaired from effectively defending a client by Mr. Lowenbach's egregious gambit of repeatedly passing gas. "It was disgusting," Mr. Head fumed while announcing that he would appeal his client's conviction. According to Mr. Head's computations, during the four-week trial Mr. Lowenbach broke wind "about 100 times. He even lifted his leg several times." The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has yet to rise to Mr. Lowenbach's defense, its lawyers having been immersed in the "T-shirt rights" issue. When security guards barred a bicycle messenger wearing a T-shirt adorned with "Meese Is a Pig" from entering the Justice Department, the ACLU threatened action. Said the ACLU's chief *philosophe*, Mr. Arthur B. Spitzer, "If they had a rule that said no T-shirts, that might be an acceptable rule. But apparently they have a rule that says no T-shirts that insult Ed Meese." The reasoning was good enough for the Attorney General and henceforth the First Amendment applies to T-shirts, at least on the premises of the Justice Department.

•Miss Gigi Hamilton Newhard, the daughter of Mr. Harry Wallace Newhard of St. Louis and of Mrs. Richard Pearman of Paget, Bermuda, and Mr. Averell Harriman Mortimer, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley G. Mortimer, were married on June 25 by the sea. Miss Katherine Lee Ridder's engagement to Mr. Peter Morgan Pennoyer, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Pennoyer of New York and Katonah, New York, was announced by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. P. Anthony Ridder of Miami. The couple plans a September ceremony, though by then anything can happen. Dried blood and animal entrails found in the dormitory rooms of four University of Minnesota football players have caused their eviction. Mr. Kent Rees, a "university environmental health hygiene officer" who is a specialist in dealing with the university's football players, also found an empty beer box filled with maggots and body parts from a beaver, squirrels, and other animals before pronouncing the rooms "unfit for human habitation."

•Aspin Hill Pet Cemetery in Silver Spring, Maryland, has been purchased by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), an animal rights group that intends to preserve the historic cemetery, which contains the remains of 70,000 creatures including more than fifteen humans, Petey, a dog from the "Our Gang" television series, and a pet fly. A spokeswoman for PETA pledged "to make it [Aspin Hill Pet Cemetery] a place for contemplation, but an upbeat place." On June 15 President Reagan called for an independent counsel to examine the proliferating irregularities in the life of House Speaker Jim Wright whose monograph, *Reflections of a Public Man*, was apparently neither written nor read by the Hon. Jim Wright, nor by anyone else. Judge Gerhard Gesell decreed that the four defendants in the Iran-contra case be tried separately, and on June 10 Mr. Oliver North was chosen as the first to be tried. In Moscow Miss Maria Kalinina became the first Moscow Beauty Queen, proving that the Soviets' all-potato diet is eminently capable of producing a terrific set of legs and other fleshy assets. In Liege, Belgium, an unnamed forty-eight-year-old man has filed suit against twenty vampires—also unnamed—who, he contends, entered his second-floor flat uninvited as he watched the 1959 classic, *The Nightmare of Dracula*. There they assaulted him, causing him to leap through a window. He suffered several broken ribs and the loss of television privileges.



•The government spending machine is again building up steam. The House approved a catastrophic illness package to be grafted onto Medicare. Mr. Carl Rowan, the career Liberal and opponent of privately-owned firearms, shot a nocturnal skinny dipper, wounding the teenage desperado as he accosted Mr. Rowan by the Rowan family swimming pool. If a neoconservative is a liberal mugged by reality, perhaps it can now be said that a neoliberal is a liberal mugged by his swimming pool.

•*The Journal of the American Medical Association* is warning Americans of a modern cast of mind to eschew the chic practice of injecting cocaine into the penis before copulation. According to alarmed scientists, the practice has already caused one man to suffer a three-day erection that became surprisingly painful and eventuated in the am-

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putation of his legs and fingers. The penis had fallen off during a bath. In Indianapolis, Indiana, Miss Sherry McDonald, a substitute teacher, has been suspended for enlisting the ten-year-old boys in her class to line up and spit on two boys whom she considered beyond the pale. The Supreme Court upheld New York City's legislated bigotry against men's clubs, but there is hope that in far-off Santa Ana, California, a renaissance in judicial thought might take place. There Municipal Judge Richard Stanford, Jr. stood firmly by logic and good sense and judged Mr. Robert Hanshew, 25, guilty of driving his truck alone in a car-pool lane. Judge Stanford was unfazed by the clever Mr. Hanshew's claim that the four cadavers being transported in his van qualified as passengers. He even remained steadfast and dry-eyed when Mr. Hanshew brought up his mother's recent death and expressed the hope that no one would refer to her as "cargo." Judge Stanford fined the culprit $58 and had done with him.

•A correct-thinker showed up at Yale University's reunion for the Class of 1958 and put a match to a protest shanty erected on campus ground that had been set aside many years ago as a memorial for Yale graduates killed in combat. The patriot, Dr. Elwood D. Bracey of West Palm Beach, Florida, has been charged with third-degree arson and is free on $50,000 bail; but he has won a one-year subscription to this journal of the arts. Queen Elizabeth's representative to New Zealand, Governor General Sir Paul Reeves, was forced to resign from the Auckland Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals after reports appeared alleging that he clubbed two pigs to death in ritual ceremonies somewhere in the Third World. Finally, Mr. Eugene McCarthy is making his fourth run for the presidency, this time on the Consumer Party ticket. We immoderate materialists are all with you, Gene! *—RET*

CORRESPONDENCE

Atlanta Burns

Whew! Geoffrey Norman really doesn't like Atlanta at all, does he? ("The Hustle and Hypocrisy of Andrew Young's Atlanta," *TAS*, June 1988.) Maybe we should have thought a lot longer about this convention business if this is a sample of what's in store.

I have lived in Atlanta (city limits) for eighteen years and have worked for ten years as an Atlanta firefighter. I guess I love to curse the Young administration as much as anybody, and Lord knows I am sick to death of the racial politics which pervade city government. To be deadly serious, a working fire just does not care what color you are or if you were hired or promoted via "affirmative action." Yeah, we have a lot of real problems.

That said, Mr. Norman chose to make issues of some really silly things, and didn't even get his facts right. The nude dancing issue that he kept returning to, for example, involves a law passed by the *Georgia state legislature* over the objections of city officials. It bans the sale of liquor in establishments which feature nude dancing. A delegation of the city council even attempted to persuade the governor not to sign the bill. So, the facts as presented are dead wrong. The clubs are still open because the effective date of the bill is July 1, and the city stands to lose considerable tax revenue.

Additionally, Mr. Norman takes at face value any negative statement made by some of Atlanta's critics. The "dum-dum" bullets he refers to as "violating the Geneva Convention" are standard police hollow-point ammunition, used throughout the nation, frequently in weapons far more powerful than the APB's .38s. They are approved because the previously used target practice ammo had a tendency to go right through people without stopping them.

I won't go on, and I certainly won't be counted among Andrew Young's admirers, but Atlanta really deserves a more accurate and objective portrayal.

—William T. Brockman
Atlanta, Georgia

As a subscriber to and admirer of *The American Spectator*, I was disappointed in the editors for the tone and disappointed in Geoffrey Norman for the (tone and) substance of "The Hustle and Hypocrisy of Andrew Young's Atlanta." Mr. Norman ridicules Atlanta for the apparent hypocrisy of banning nude dancing while promoting itself as a sophisticated metropolitan area. Mr. Norman apparently did not remain in Atlanta long enough to learn that the limitations on nude dancing were legislated by the General Assembly of the state of Georgia during the 1988 session or to learn that the hostility between the mostly rural leaders of the state legislature and the white and black urban leaders of Atlanta is among Atlanta's longest-running and most compelling stories.

Certainly there has been some corruption ferreted out among elected officials of the metropolitan area's various governments. Certainly the poor are still with us. Atlantans don't deny the profundity of these problems, and Atlantans try to treat those problems. And Atlanta (like every other major American city except New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles and perhaps one or two others) is a one-newspaper town. If there is a critical story worthy of *The American Spectator* in there somewhere, I'm sorry but I missed it.

Like most Atlantans, I'm not crazy about the fringe groups which will accompany the Democratic convention. But does Mr. Norman, do the editors, fault Atlanta for wanting to host the convention or other major gatherings? Doesn't Mr. Norman support democracy and a two-party (or more) system, despite his differences with the policies of one of the parties? (Incidentally, the metropolitan Atlanta area, which Mr. Norman attacks as monolithically racist and corrupt, regularly elects an array of congressmen who belie Mr. Norman's crude caricature. Compare Newt Gingrich with Wyche Fowler.)

Since the convention is coming to Atlanta, the Chamber of Commerce would not be a chamber of commerce if it didn't try to put Atlanta's best foot forward. To attack a normal, hopeful American city for wanting to look good goes beyond cynical and nihilistic all the way to silly.

—Weyman T. Johnson, Jr.
Atlanta, Georgia

Barnes Bash

So the guy who criticized my more prominent former client for not having a vision now calls my visionary agenda for American conservatives "a lost cause" ("Why Can't Conservatives Govern?" by Fred Barnes, *TAS*, May 1988). Sorry, Fred, you cannot have it both ways.

A vision is, by necessity, visionary: meaning it is not immediately practical. That is what makes it visionary. Yes, practical men of affairs (and, apparently, practical journalists) always think visions are "nuts." They are. That is why it is so difficult to create an appealing one. Yet, it is their very impracticality which moves other men and women of vision to reach beyond the status quo. Vision makes change possible. The fact that Barnes believes conservatives will follow the vision because it is impractical is precisely the point: conservatives are the change agents, wanting to move society away from the stifling status quo of the centralized welfare state.

Barnes's "rule of thumb is that any conservative goal that was not achieved by Reagan is not achievable, at least not in this century." Fred is too young to remember, but that is precisely what the practical people said to us when we formed the conservative movement at the end of the Eisenhower Administration. If we had listened to the neoconservatives then (who at that time were called moderates), there never would have been the conservative journals in the fifties, the youth movement in the sixties, conservative control of the Republican party in 1964, the conservative think tanks and organizations in the 1960s and 1970s, the Reagan movement in 1976, and the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 and 1984. As an aside, there would not have been a place for a young man named Bob Tyrrell, who was part of that movement. That is, all of the things that Fred Barnes now takes for granted as the accepted status quo would not have happened if the unrealistic agenda of the 1950s' conservative movement had not been created after the Eisenhower Administration had done all that the pragmatists said was realistic to reform the New Deal.

I praise Heaven there are Fred Barneses, because we need imaginative incremental change. When he proposes a universal tax credit for day care rather than a U.S. Department of Day Care, or more spending on the interstate road system, airports, space program, and a universal guarantee of jobs at slightly below the minimum wage rather than UDAG, SBA, Amtrak, and guaranteed make-work jobs, I will agree his alternatives are better. A bit.

Fine. Let the pragmatists promote the practical. Yet, there is probably a good chance that a President Dukakis could adopt many of Barnes's proposals. They are so practical, even liberal Democrats might accept them. That is the point. We visionaries want to make more substantial changes because more is needed, even if it takes time. Twenty years from now, let Fred Barnes write another column to say again, "I'd love to see Devine succeed, but he hasn't a prayer," to the next visionary and tell us again that nothing much more can be done until the next century. Hey,

(continued on page 48)

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EDITORIALS

JESSE'S PLACE

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Seven million Democrats voted for Jesse Jackson to be the presidential nominee of his party. He will arrive at the Democratic national convention with about 1,200 delegates, not the back-slapping, life-of-the-party type, but 1,200 delegates alive to the radical thought that they might for the first time ever place a black on the ticket of a major political party. Still, many Democratic potentates speak the current wisdom of the primary season when they say that surely Jesse Jackson is too smart or too mature to seek a place on the Democratic ticket. If I were Jesse I would be developing a slow burn, and the news seeping out of his recent meetings with Governor Michael S. Dukakis suggests that he is.

During the Democratic primaries and caucuses he insisted that he was bringing new voters into the Democratic mob. No one denied it. He said he was making the party "more representative" and "progressive." All Democratic potentates agreed. Well, if he has brought new strength to the Democratic ticket, if he is the surpassing orator, the galvanic force, why do his fellow Democrats not now agree with him that he is worthy of the number two spot on the Democratic ticket? Is it because his politics are simply too radical? Is it because he lacks any experience whatsoever and as Vice President would be but a heart-beat away from the nuclear button? Then why is there no one in the Democratic party willing to say it?

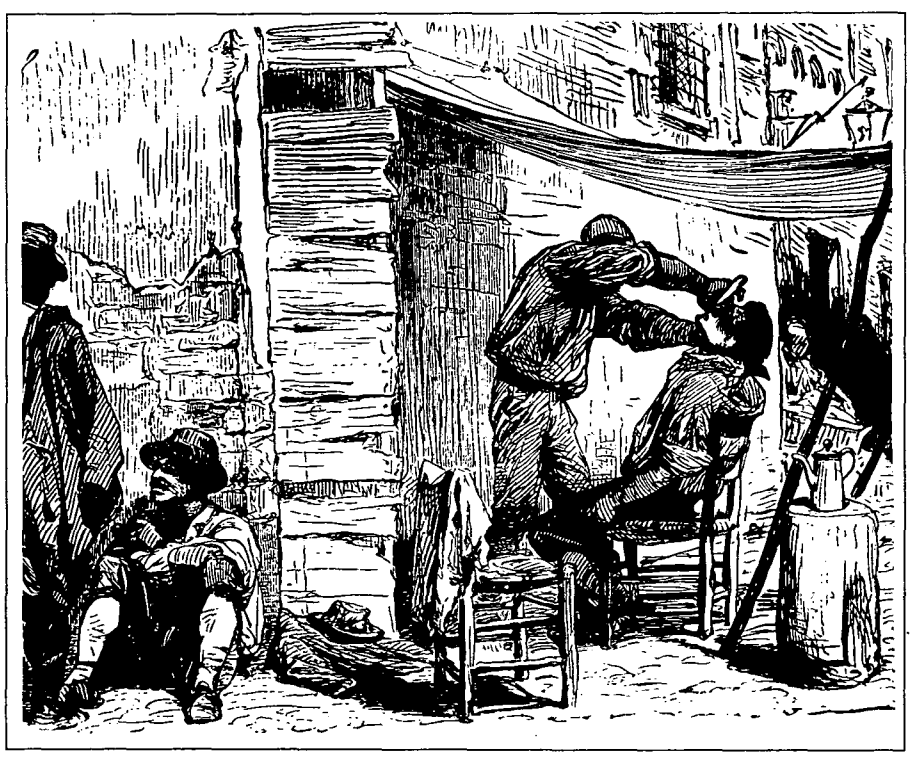
The Democrats cannot have it both ways. They cannot go along with Jesse's claim that he has made the Democratic party unstoppable in the fall, but then say that as the Democrats' vice presidential candidate he would doom the ticket. The smart money here in Washington argues that a very smooth Michael S. Dukakis is going to prevail upon the Democrats' leading black politicos to keep Jesse off the ticket. Once again they are deluding themselves. Jesse cannot be sidestepped. And there is a surging groundswell of support beneath these black leaders to put Jesse on the ticket. Black voters will not allow their leaders to abandon Jesse.

And what is Jesse up to? He is still on the campaign trail, and sounding irritable. "I'm asked over and over again," he recently remarked in Houston, "a very basic question—what does Jesse want. It's a confused question, full of contempt and disrespect; a question not asked any other candidate, those who started and those who failed. . . . I've rebuilt the progressive wing of the Democratic party. I've expanded our party. We can only talk of winning in '88 because of what we built in '84 and did in '85, '86, and '87." It looks to me, as it looked two months ago, that this man wants a place on Mr. Dukakis's ticket and any attempt to cut him out is going to make him angrier than he already is.

Moreover the groundswell in the black community suggests that Jesse's candidacy could get out of hand. There could come a point in the next few weeks when the Democrats lose a sizable portion of the black vote whether Jesse is appeased by them or not. The growing chorus of support for Jesse's place on the ticket makes what seemed so improbable months ago appear eminently plausible. The Congressional Black Caucus, black mayors, and the rank and file of the black community are contributing to the clamor for Jesse. Soon other elements in the Democratic party are going to be aroused to support him.

The Democratic potentates are usually professional pols. Their demands are reasonable. All they want is power. Unfortunately, now as in the 1970s they are unaware of the kinds of zealots that populate most of the interest groups of the modern Democratic coalition. These zealots want something other than power from politics. They are driven by *outré*. They want a sense of existential well-being, good Karma, a pleasant sense of oneness with the Cosmos, the Revolution, the Movement—that sort of flapdoodle. I suspect that these activists, who for the most part are white, are beginning to see Jesse's place on the ticket as a Moral Imperative. Every day Jesse's strength grows, and with the zealots pushing for him, July's Democratic convention will again rival the ancient spectacle of the Roman Forum, or I am a platypus. □

Adapted from RET's weekly Washington Post *column syndicated by King Features.*



LEGAL BRAWLEY

New York

If this city's garish Tawana Brawley case accomplishes anything of value, it ought at least to focus our minds on the heinous nature of violent crime and the delicate condition of our legal system. New York, particularly, is an urban exposition center for an extraordinary kind of animal savagery that underclass males of both races now perpetrate ever more blatantly against the defenseless. The only problem with this last observation is that it might libel animals, thereby getting me in dutch with animal rights groups whose members can make the irrefutable point that no animal displays such pride in his ferocity as America's street psychopath.

The grisly acts of rape, confinement, disfigurement, and racist indignity that Tawana Brawley, a black teenager, claims were practiced against her in Wappingers Falls, New York, are not exactly commonplace; but they take place frequently enough to evoke growing concern among the law-abiding. This is why Miss Brawley's refusal to cooperate with New York's criminal justice system is in itself criminal. It discourages Americans from facing up to this particularly brutal kind of crime. Moreover, the kind of deranged brutes who Miss Brawley assures us attacked her are the kind of psychopaths likely to strike again. As long as she and the charlatans around her thwart the prosecution of these men, they are free to repeat their crimes.

Miss Brawley's entourage of lawyers, holy men, rabblerousers, and other buffoons is putting on a very entertaining show with their red-hot accusations

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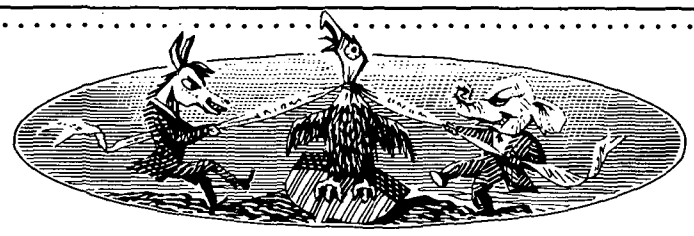
that local, state, and federal officials have concocted a gigantic cover-up entoiling such diverse phenomena as the New York governor's office, the Ku Klux Klan, the New York City mayor's office, the Irish Republican Army, and now I suppose one has to mention church sanctuary. But innocents are going to suffer when this show ends. There are the future victims of Miss Brawley's assailants, and there are the many victims of rape, child abuse, and racist assaults. Getting them to bring their stories to the police has been difficult enough in the past. Given the lurid picture of the courts and the police that Miss Brawley's showmen are painting, these victims are going to be even less willing to make their suffering known. Hence the animal savagery of our streets will continue and perhaps get worse.

The final victim of the Brawley hijinks, of course, is the legal system. It may be biased as the showmen say, but it is still the only instrument for justice that the victims of criminal violence have; and it is the public's best defense against America's street psychopaths. The antics of the Brawley entourage and the attendant defaming of New York's criminal justice system, plus the absurd leniency of New York's officials toward Miss Brawley and her showmen, now threaten this last line of defense against thugs. That is the fundamental tragedy of the Brawley farce.

Months ago, when his masterful and amusing novel about this city was with the printer, Tom Wolfe worried that critics would think that he stole his story from the city's daily newspapers. He feared that the critics would mark down *The Bonfire of the Vanities* as another of Wolfe's works of journalism, rather than appraise it as his first work of fiction. He had reason to worry; the rogues and the con men portrayed in his novel are on daily display in this city's news stories, and the Brawley case abounds with Wolfean characters. But Wolfe was making serious points about the dangers of the streets and about the city's criminal justice system. The Brawley case is a reminder of how serious Wolfe, the satirist, really is. New York is sliding toward the State of Nature envisaged by the seventeenth-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes, wherein life is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

To prevent further decline New York's law enforcement officials had best arrest, try, and punish criminals. And for a certitude those who ignore subpoenas and defy the courts ought to be put in the slammer too. The whole Brawley entourage strikes me as a promising target for this salutary process. □

CAPITOL IDEAS



REAGAN, ARMAND, GORBY & COCKBURN

by Tom Bethell

Readers of this column should beware of predictions about U.S.-Soviet affairs. At one point I reassuringly promised that President Reagan would sign no arms control agreements, at another that he most assuredly would never go to a Moscow summit. Too optimistic, as always! Undaunted, I have nonetheless been thinking lately that Reagan, in his chummy friendship with Mikhail Gorbachev, may unintentionally have introduced an unstable element into the life of the Communist party of the Soviet Union.

First of all we should recognize that the Soviet system, although materially hopeless compared with free markets, is nonetheless remarkably stable, having survived for seventy years. Secondly, there can be no doubt that Gorbachev really does want to restructure the Soviet Union internally, in order to make the economy work better. But restructuring a stable system almost certainly means destabilizing it; and restructuring Communism certainly means undermining it. So you can't have both Communism and perestroika. And that means you can't have socialism and perestroika, whatever Armand Hammer thinks.

Hammer, chairman of Occidental Petroleum Corporation and friend of Lenin, wrote a piece for the *New York Times* after the Moscow summit saying he believes that "Mr. Gorbachev has committed himself to making Socialism (not Communism) work in his own country by raising the standard of living of his own people and that this ambition is his single-minded priority." That may be, but the distinction between Communism and socialism is a false one: Communism is nothing more than stable socialism, administered by people who do not intend to let others vote them out of office. If Mr. Hammer is implying here that Gorbachev himself does make a distinction and has given up on Communism then he certainly will be deposed—by the Communists (or "conservatives" as I see they are now called in the U.S. media).

We know that in the normal course of events the Soviet Communist party does not permit itself to be undermined by well-meaning reforms, however much the general secretary of the party might desire such changes. "Conservatives" have always thwarted such restructurings in the past (for earlier Soviet rulers have tried to make Communism work better by rearranging things). To keep everything unchanged—Communists really are "conservative" in this sense—they have always used the argument that with so dangerous an enemy as the United States, now is not the time to tinker. This strategy has successfully kept the party's power and perquisites undiluted for decades.

By now Gorbachev has seen enough of Reagan to know what a harmless old codger he is, and presumably he has been able to persuade his chief underlings of this undeniable truth. At the same time, of course, it is becoming harder and harder to disguise the fact that Communism is a materialistic system that doesn't deliver the material goods. For these reasons, it seems, the Soviet strongman has been permitted to press his reforms much further than normal. Nonetheless, I believe that Gorbachev will not be permitted to go any further. Perestroika is doomed to fail.

Readers have the advantage this time because I am writing before the vaunted Communist party conference in Moscow, whereas you will be reading it after the conference is over. I predict (safely enough) that nothing will change, that the "conservatives" will prevail, and that Gorbachev will be politely rebuffed. The Soviet economy will, therefore, continue to stagnate, as it has all along. The solution for the Soviets will be to retain Mr. Gorbachev as their smiling front-man so that Commerce Secretary William Verity and his contingent of useful idiots keep the credits flowing.

This will keep the new missiles under construction and the specialty stores stocked with caviar for party elites, *without* at the same time allowing anything very destabilizing in the way of perestroika to occur. It should not be too difficult to contrive such a balancing act: Get rid of perestroika in fact if not reality, in order to preserve the privileges and immunities of the party; and keep Gorbachev as a figurehead lest Western credits be endangered. The main goal of the Communist party conference could be summarized this way: Keep the *New York Times* happy.

Do conservatives in the U.S. likewise relish the prospect of Gorbachev failing to implement his reforms? Let us now take a look at the anti-perestroika murmurings on the American left. Esther Kingston-Mann, a history professor at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, worried in *In These Times* that the Soviet reformers "cannot ignore the troubling possibility that their 'newly liberated' entrepreneurs might acquire wealth and power beyond their numbers and go on to subvert the social security provided to the

(continued on page 12)

Tom Bethell is The American Spectator*'s Washington correspondent and a media fellow at the Hoover Institution. A collection of his essays,* The Electric Windmill, *was published this spring by Regnery Gateway.*

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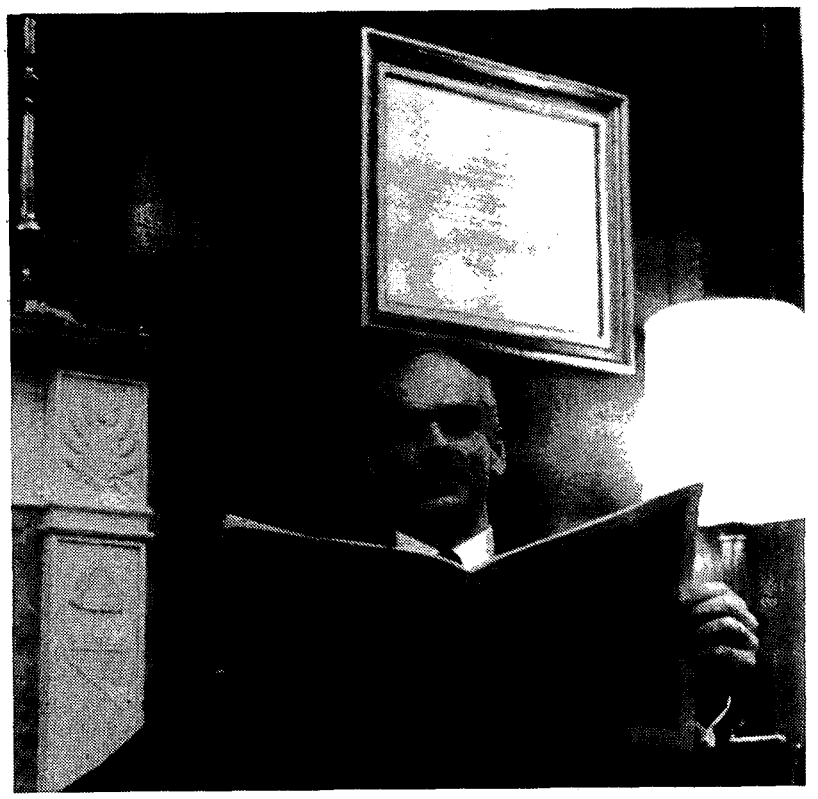

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majority of the population. They must fear that ordinary citizens will consider the proposed changes a breach of a longstanding social contract. After all, the Soviet leadership has always tried to justify its policies and explain away the need for political oppression by focusing on advances toward equality and social justice."

She obviously thinks that the system works pretty well for "ordinary citizens," protected by their "social contract" (a good new euphemism for Communism, incidentally), who receive "social security" in return for "political oppression." Not a bad deal! But perestroika could subvert it with inequality and injustice.

The most forthright attack on what's been happening comes from Alexander Cockburn in the *Nation*. His father, the late Claude Cockburn, was in his heyday in the 1930s a member of the British Communist party and the London correspondent for *Pravda*. Alex, a chip off the old block, now positions himself well to the left of Gorbachev and the current (wishy-washy) *Pravda*. In a June 4 column entitled "Lenin, Thou Shouldst, etc." Cockburn writes:

> I'm all for *glasnost* and *perestroika*—at least as articulated to me in Moscow last November by Boris Kagarlitsky—but on the international side Gorby's alleged intimates and advisers, Arbatov and Burlatsky and the others, are becoming singularly unimpressive, mostly because they, like their boss, seem resolved to see the world in entirely bipolar terms, with the ancillary goal of saying or doing absolutely nothing to upset the Atlantic powers, or to deny themselves an honorary doctorate at Tufts some time in the near future.
>
> Is this where it is all going to end, the heritage of October, the tradition of Tukhachevsky and Dimitrov [tyrannical Bulgarian strongman], with bilateral commissions adorned by a former chief of the CIA [William Colby] and the head of Novosti, jointly denouncing "adventurism"?

Cockburn mocked Soviet "détenteniks" who are "ready to sell out world revolution anytime for the sake of a cocktail party at the Council on Foreign Relations." Particularly disturbing to Cockburn: "Arbatov and the other Soviet détenteniks had no visible misgivings" in signing a document under whose rules of conduct "invaluable Soviet support for the Angolan revolution would be regarded as illegitimate, as probably would similar Soviet efforts to defend the revolution in Vietnam and Nicaragua." A columnist for the *Wall Street Journal* in addition to the *Nation*, Cockburn went on to recall the glory days of Leonid Brezhnev, "who did after all preside over the consolidation of the Soviet Union as a modern industrial state and, relatively speaking, a golden age for the Soviet working class, aside from sponsoring the exemplary acts of proletarian internationalism," i.e., the invasion of Afghanistan and the creation of client states in Africa, that Cockburn is now horrified to see under attack in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*.

Thus spake Cockburn. Can the *New York Times* be far behind? Far more discreetly, of course. From the paper of record we may expect nothing more dramatic than muted editorials urging the Soviets to proceed with a greater degree of circumspection. But make no mistake, the protection of Soviet "gains" will be the goal.

Cockburn has a point, of course. For those (admittedly few) who are clear-headed enough to recognize that Communism is what they *want*, and not something that the world has been accidentally saddled with, perestroika must not be allowed to go so far as to undermine the legitimacy of Communism. David Satter in the *New Republic* believes that glasnost has not gone so far as to "analyze underlying causes." Newly published books "indict Stalin, not socialism," Satter writes. But even as his article appeared, Bill Keller reported in the *New York Times* that Soviet intellectuals were "on the verge of official heresy—the idea that Stalin was no accident, that something in Com-

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munism made him likely, if not inevitable." Keller quoted a writer in *Novy Mir* as implicating Lenin himself in "the Soviet legacy of terror and repression," adding that the Communist system, "with its concentration of power in one party and state-ownership of all income-producing property, tends to produce tyrants."

Even Solzhenitsyn's friend, Igor Shafarevich, the author of a remarkable book entitled *The Socialist Phenomenon*, identifying the Western hunger for socialism as a death wish on a large scale, has recently been published by *Moscow News*! It seems, then, that glasnost, if not perestroika (in a sense the distinction between the two corresponds to the distinction between talk and action) has gone far enough to risk delegitimizing the whole enterprise. Words are dangerous things, and Communism is now as imperiled by them as Catholicism would be if *Osservatore Romano* were to publish papally sanctioned articles attacking long-held church dogmas.

Cockburn, of course, has allies among the Soviet "conservatives," perhaps the best known being Yegor Ligachev, the number-two man in the ruling Politburo. He is often identified as Gorbachev's most influential opponent. According to the *Washington Post*'s Gary Lee, Ligachev recently visited Togliatti, 600 miles east of Moscow, for presentation of the Red Banner of Lenin to the country's largest (Lada, son of Fiat) automobile plant and congratulate its workers' "successes in cultural and economic construction."

"Foreign voices want the USSR to have a political opposition," Ligachev said indignantly, perhaps thinking of Reagan and his CIA advisers on those bilateral commissions that give Cockburn heartburn. "They are dishing up to us the idea of a multiparty system. But if we consider the 'advice' that our country's economy be placed on the footing of Western market economies, little remains of socialism. All that [advice] is aimed at weakening the political stability in the country, upsetting social justice and stimulating a far-reaching stratification in the society."

Well said, Ligachev! Notice the echoes of *In These Times*'s Esther Kingston-Mann, not to mention the *Nation*'s Cockburn. (The *Nation* itself has editorially taken an innocuous "good liberal" position: "We can only hope that the conciliatory tone of Reagan's speech signals a U.S. decision to intervene on Gorbachev's side in the party struggle under way in Moscow," etc.) Notice also that Ligachev, unlike Armand Hammer, really does understand that it is socialism that is threatened by perestroika, not just the Communist party.

So the bedfellows are strange, are they not? On the one hand we have Cockburn, Ligachev, anonymous Soviet bureaucrats, assorted "conservatives" of the CPSU. And with them undoubtedly stand many American leftists, likely readers of *In These Times*, *Mother Jones* and such, who share Cockburn's views but not his candor. On the other hand we find Reagan, Gorbachev, Armand Hammer, Victor Navasky (the editor of the *Nation*), and with them a host of well-meaning liberals too numerous to mention.

For once I'm in bed with the liberals, with Reagan, and with Armand Hammer too. For Ligachev is right. The Westerners' advice may not be, as he says, *aimed* at "weakening political stability" in the Soviet Union, but if heeded its *effect* would certainly be that, and if good things happen unintentionally, that is good enough for me. Then again, perhaps it was not so unintentional. Rumors from CIA hands hint that the late, great Bill Casey may very well have cooked this whole thing up in Langley, Virginia, slyly enlisting an unwitting Armand Hammer in his cause. Colby indeed! I see the fine hand of Casey . . . □

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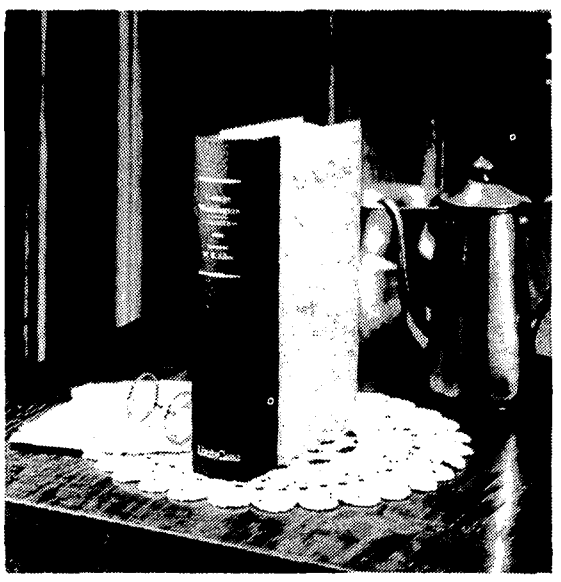

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Victor Gold

FIGHTING MIKE'S FIGHT: HOW BUSH CAN LOSE

An old campaigner explains there is an alternative to slugging on Dukakis's terms.

BUSH SUPPORTERS SEEKING PLATFORM TO REFLECT A MORE HUMANE PARTY

Supporters of Vice President Bush are hoping to use the 1988 Republican platform to make two key statements: that Mr. Bush is a leader who is ready to move in directions that President Reagan has not tried and that the politics of Michael S. Dukakis are out of touch with the majority of American voters . . .

As envisioned by Mr. Bush's aides, the platform will attempt to spell out what Mr. Bush's leadership would mean. For example, they say it will stress that the Vice President will make such issues as education a priority and that it will receive more Federal money than it has under President Reagan. . . . [They] also expect the platform to reflect the Vice President's contention that the Republican party must become committed to the environment . . .

—New York Times, *June 22, 1988.*

Call it the Quarry Strategy.

Once, in the not-too-distant past, there was a heavyweight contender named Jerry Quarry. Good size, strong heart, could deliver and take a punch. But a fighter with a problem: he had a bad habit of missing the obvious, playing directly to his opponent's strength and away from his own.

Two examples: the first, Quarry's fight plan in his match against Muhammad Ali; the second, his fight plan in his match against Joe Frazier. Ali, as we know, was one of the best boxers (as opposed to sluggers) in heavyweight history. Frazier, on the other hand, was one of the sport's most feared sluggers (but only a fair boxer). Obviously, Quarry's best chance at beating Ali was to force him into a slugging match. Instead, he opted to box the boxer, and lost. Obviously, Quarry's best chance at beating Frazier was to outbox him. Instead, he opted to slug it out with the slugger, and lost. When last seen, Jerry Quarry was doing a song-and-dance act at Don Ho's in Honolulu.

Victor Gold is The American Spectator*'s national correspondent.*

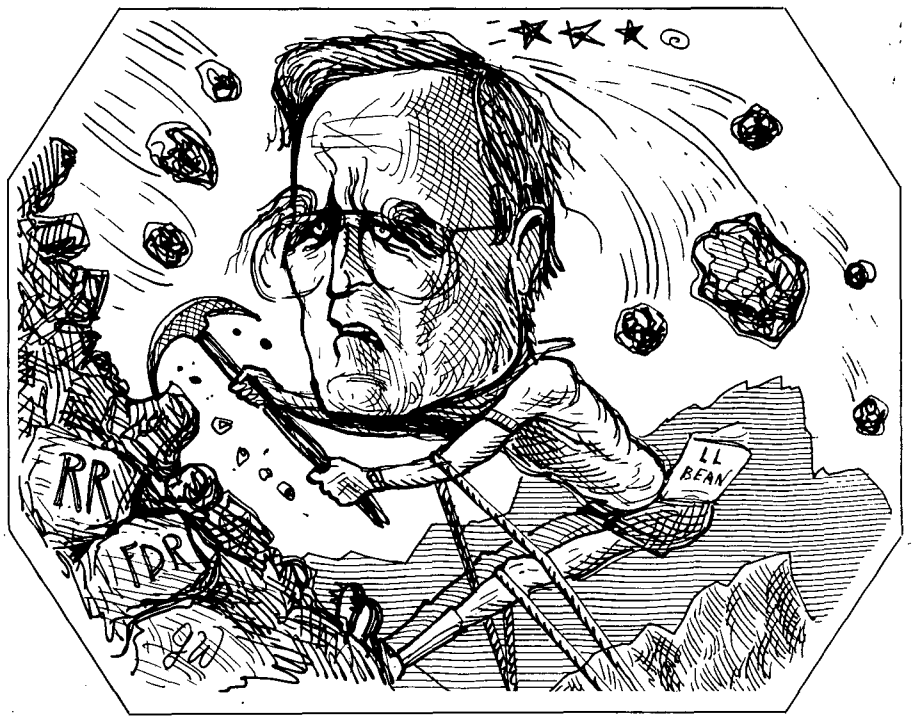
Now consider George Bush, when last seen being advised by unnamed "aides" to "move in directions that President Reagan has not tried," the better to "reflect a more humane party."

Call time. Get out the corner stool. Tell the Republican contender to inhale-exhale ten times, sit back, unwind, and listen. Before he moves into the middle and late rounds, let's remind him—along with those unnamed "aides" in his corner—exactly what this match is all about: how he got here, how his opponent got here. A review is in order, quick and to-the-point: a strong dose of between-round smelling salts to lift the media miasma and clear the mind.

First, let's talk about those "humane" (sic) issues the *Times* says are "envisioned by Mr. Bush's aides" to "spell out what Mr. Bush's leadership would mean." Among other things, according to the *Times*, this translates into trying to beat a Democrat by promising to spend more federal money on education (an attempt to out-dance Ali), and trying to out-bid Michael Dukakis on issues concerning the environment (trading left hooks with Joe Frazier).

Don't misunderstand. There's nothing wrong with including planks about education and the environment in the Republican platform of 1988. It's just important to recognize that, fairly or unfairly, these issues play to Democratic not Republican strengths, i.e., if the elections of 1980 and 1984 had been run and decided along those lines, George Bush wouldn't be Vice President of the United States.

Next, let's take up this business—also attributed to Bush "aides"—of their candidate's need to establish his own "identity" in order to win in November. That's simply an old campaign canard in new semantic dress. Remember "vision of the future"? This time a year ago—in fact, up until Bush flattened his Republican opposition in the Super Tuesday primaries—experts were saying that his candidacy wouldn't get past the early rounds because it lacked "vision." That theory having been knocked out of the ring, we now hear it said that George Bush is suffering from some sort of identity crisis.



Wrong again. George Bush already has an identity and any attempt to change it at this late date is likely to leave him open to counter-punches. What's more, unless his "aides" succeed in obscuring it, Bush's identity should give him the winning edge this fall. Who is he? He is, nothing more, nothing less, than Ronald Reagan's Vice President, a key figure in an administration that has given the American people eight years of—but let a non-partisan observer finish the thought: At the concluding ceremony of this year's economic summit in Toronto, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, noting that "the Reagan era" was drawing to a close, described it in glowing terms as a period that will go into history "remembered as one of peace and prosperity."

Inhale-exhale, repeat ten times: *Peace and prosperity, peace and prosperity* . . . You wouldn't know it if all you listened to was Michael Dukakis and his allies in the liberal news media, of course. The Democrats' fight plan, you see, is to talk Iran-Contra, Noriega, Meese—whatever it takes to obscure the Reagan record; which brings us to the final point that needs to be made before the Bush-Dukakis match moves into its middle and late rounds:

Whichever way you cut it, history will look back on the election of 1988 as a referendum on the Reagan era. This translates, if George Bush is to win, into a campaign based on the question, *Do you like the policies of the past eight years that have brought the country peace and prosperity, or do you want to change*?

It's that simple. Not more federal money for education, George, not the environment. Just Reagan, peace, and prosperity. All other roads lead to Don Ho's. □

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Warren T. Brookes

THE SILENT BOOM

George Bush has a boom economy to brag about.
What more could he possibly need?

As the primary campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination wound down in late spring, Jesse Jackson and Michael Dukakis continued their pledges to "end economic violence by ending Reaganomics," and "to put America back to work in decent jobs with decent pay." As they spoke, the U.S. unemployment rate dropped to its lowest rate in fourteen years, while the U.S. economy generated a world's record rate of employment (the employment ratio of jobholders to population), ten points above Europe, and one point above Japan.

The fact that Jackson's and Dukakis's rhetoric went unchallenged by a sycophantic press shows how difficult is the task facing George Bush—and it's much worse than he thinks.

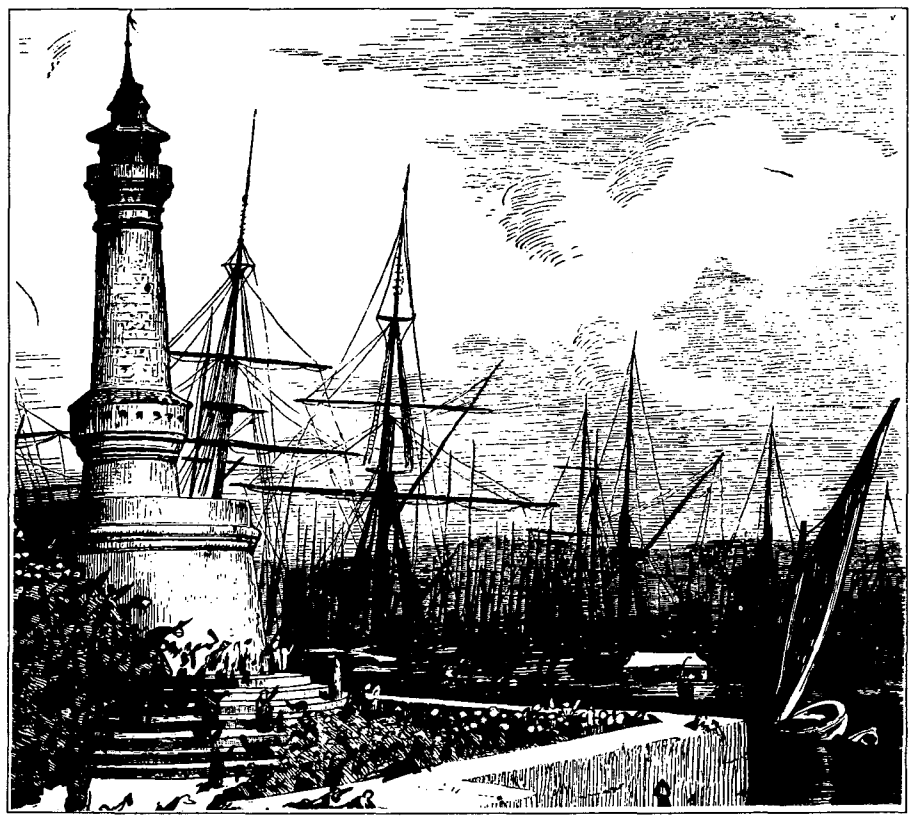
On May 26, for example, the Commerce Department revised its first quarter GNP growth estimate from 2.3 to 3.9 percent, from solid growth to a powerful surge. Yet the media treated this good news as a "new threat to inflation." The same pundits who six months ago were warning the nation of a recession or a depression now are warning us either of "the dangers of a boom," or of the economy's impending takeover by foreign powers.

Last January, there was a cartoon in the *Christian Science Monitor*—a normally moderate and sensible organ—showing Uncle Sam as a bedraggled and grease-stained mechanic standing next to the open hood of a tattered, over-sized, broken-down American car, labeled "U.S. economy." He was eyeing an on-rushing Model-T filled with Hispanics labeled "Latin American Debtors," all of them yelling cheerily at Uncle Sam, "Going our way?" The implication was clear: the *Monitor*, like the rest of the establishment press, tends to see the U.S. economy as a banana republic headed down the Latin American route, laden with external debt, ready to default at any moment.

But, just a week or so before that cartoon appeared, Charles Wolf and Sarah Hooker of the Rand Corporation reported in the *Wall Street Journal* that when our foreign investments are properly valued at market level, the U.S. in 1986 was a net *creditor* nation, to the tune of at least $50 billion—instead of $264 billion in debt, as the Commerce Department reported.

The reason for this is that the "net debt" position reported by Commerce is based on valuing all investments at book, not market, value. Since most of the U.S. investment abroad was made ten to thirty years ago, it is badly undervalued, while virtually all of the foreign investment in the U.S. was made in the last decade, and is closer to its real market value.

Rand's common sense analysis was backed up by a simple fact: In 1986, when we supposedly became "the largest debtor nation on earth," U.S. income from overseas investments was $20.8 billion greater than U.S. payments to foreign creditors and investors. As Milton Friedman politely told the Commerce Department in an article, "If your income from investments exceeds the cost of carrying your investments, you are clearly *not* a debtor."



The point of these examples should be clear. Shallow economic reporting and a fountain of misinformation have combined to spook and depreciate an otherwise booming economy.

That economy is now in its record sixty-eighth month of a peacetime recovery whose *average* GNP growth has been nearly 4 percent a year, and which has created over 15 million jobs even as it cut inflation from 12.6 percent to less than 4 percent, and put on the best competitiveness performance in the postwar history of the United States. In the process it has destroyed the ugly Phillips Curve, which postulated that there was a trade-off between inflation and unemployment.

That's the *good* news.

The *bad* news is that few Americans, and even very few investors, seem to know the good news. And unless George Bush can get across the good news—and how he intends to keep making it better—the public will put an end to the most powerful and successful economic restructuring ever undertaken by a major and mature industrial power.

The greatest irony of the Reagan recovery is that its loudest noise thus far was made on October 19 of last year. Yet at the moment of the market crash, the U. S. economy was expanding at its most rapid rate since 1983, with industrial production up over 5 percent, total jobs up over 3 million, and manufacturing jobs then up 340,000 from the year before—a rate of growth that has expanded to 466,000 a year as of April.

Factory capacity was at peak operating levels, as was the employment ratio, along with help-wanted advertising, and consumer confidence. Capital spending was surging at the fastest rate in three years, manufacturing profit reports were the highest since the 1960s, and exports were soaring by 20 percent, in an economy where unit sales per worker were rising more than thirteen percentage points faster than unit labor costs.

So what caused the crash?

Certainly an unnecessarily extreme shift in Fed policy—from far too loose in 1986, when money growth averaged 15 percent, to far too tight in 1987, when it averaged less than 2 percent—had much to do with it; even as stock yields had fallen to 5 percent or less, long T-bond yields had risen to more than 10 percent. Something *had* to give.

But that should only have caused a nasty but nevertheless controllable correction. What turned it into a crash?

I think two things: first, extreme but

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unwarranted fears about the future strength of the U.S. economy, in what I call the "silent boom," and second, the sudden and fully justified realization in the wake of Iran-contra that the Reagan years were over, and that no matter who is elected, the 1988 election could in fact reverse all the gains that were made.

As an example, consider the real story behind the nation's government deficit. About a year and a half ago in December 1986, my editor and I had lunch with the very bright young thirty-two-year-old state treasurer of Michigan, Bob Bowman, formerly a whiz kid with Goldman Sachs. He spent much of the lunch good-mouthing the "comeback recovery" of Michigan and bad-mouthing the Reagan Administration and its allegedly foolish economic policies.

Some of this was good-natured ribbing of the *Detroit News*'s persistent pickiness against Bowman's liberal Democratic boss, Gov. James Blanchard, so we took it in stride. But near the end of the lunch, I finally got lucky and asked him just the right question: "By the way, how are Michigan's public pension funds doing?"

Dropping his political guard momentarily, he was suddenly and immensely proud: "We are nearly fully funded on the teachers and over 100 percent funded on the public employees." He then went on to tell us in glowing detail how, when he became treasurer in January 1983, he immediately moved those pension funds, then about 70 percent-funded and worth about $6 billion, heavily into common stocks.

Under his guidance the value of the Michigan funds has (very quietly) soared to more than $16 billion, even after the crash. As a result, Michigan's huge non-contributory pension funds (entirely taxpayer funded) are fully funded at least thirteen years ahead of the schedule announced as recently as 1981. So instead of being a permanent drain of more than $500 million in annual taxpayer contributions (over and above Social Security), they now throw off nearly $2.5 billion a year in income and growth, three times the cost of the pensions.

(By contrast, Governor Michael Dukakis has actually *decreased* the level of funding of the Massachusetts pension system to less than 32 percent, and its unfunded liability has soared over 65 percent since 1983, from $6 billion to more than $10 billion, the worst performance in the nation.)

Now, as of the moment when I asked my question, no one in the Michigan public or the legislature had any idea of this incredible explosion of pension wealth. It was simply hidden from public view by Democrats who didn't want the taxpayers to know!

Yet what happened in Michigan has *very quietly* been happening in most states around the nation. Much of the federal deficit has been offset by soaring $60 billion-plus annual surpluses in the national income accounts of state and local governments—most of it in the form of booming pension-fund wealth.

Shallow economic reporting and a fountain of misinformation have combined to spook and depreciate an otherwise booming economy.

Indeed, it may come as a shock that the nation's total government deficit (at all levels combined) this last year was less than $108 billion, or about 2.4 percent of GNP—well below most of the major nations of the world.

What this means, of course, is that, at least in part due to the bull market of 1982-87, our actual deficits have never been as large as we were led to believe, and even after the crash the net rise in stock and bond values has been nearly triple the net $732 billion rise in real public debt since 1981.

The fact that you are probably being pleasantly surprised by this good news merely shows how dangerously at variance the public mood about the economy is with its reality. Polls consistently show that while public satisfaction with individual economic fortunes is at near record highs (over 70 percent), pessimism about the national economy is now at 1982 early recession lows!

And why not? If an ignorant alien were to visit the U.S. today and simply listen to the network news or read the *Washington Post* (whose stories are regurgitated by the press around the country), they would think the country is on the brink of depression.

The negativity takes many forms. In his current best-seller, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, Yale professor Paul Kennedy asks "How can the United States' relative decline be made to occur as smoothly and as slowly as possible?" Kennedy has since joined up with Norman Lear and Dukakis advisor Lawrence Summers to try to sell editorial writers on a "non-partisan" plan "to rebuild America."

Then there's Larry Krause, a Brookings Institution scholar who told the Democrats at the Joint Economic Committee a year ago: "Japan is replacing the U.S. as the world's strongest economic power. It is in everyone's interest that the transition go smoothly." In pursuing this Carteresque vision of Avis-hood, Professor Krause has apparently not noticed that Japan has zero population growth, zero natural resources, and, if it had to pay for its own defense, would pitch off the cliff with the resulting tax burden. That's why it is now sending all of its spare cash to invest in the U.S.!

Harvard's Robert Reich, ignoring the entrepreneurial explosion taking place within blocks of his Cambridge offices, argues that "the myth of the self-made man" should be abandoned because "the opportunistic individual short-circuits progress," and "is no longer appropriate to our place in the world." Professor Reich is advising Michael Dukakis.

The plain truth is that the current recovery, now well into its record sixth year, has also been stronger than any peacetime recovery in our history, with GNP growth and per capita income growth setting a far stronger pace than anyone has noticed. (See Table 1.)

One reason this recovery has been so "silent" is that it has been fueled not by the big noisy corporations, but, contrary to Robert Reich, by an entrepreneurial boom in smaller businesses. As Joel Kotkin, the west coast editor of *INC.* magazine, put it in an article in the January 17 *Washington Post*, "From Thatcher's England to Takeshita's Japan, emulating America's entrepreneurial explosion has become a fundamental goal of policy-makers. . . . While large corporations lost 1.4 million manufacturing jobs between 1974 and 1984, those losses were virtually made up by positions created by 41,000 *new* industrial companies formed during that period. Companies with fewer than 250 employees, which now make up some 42 percent of all manufacturing employment, could constitute an absolute majority by the early 1990's."

As Peter Drucker puts it, "America shares equally in the crisis that afflicts all developed countries, but in entrepreneurship, in creating the different and the new, the U.S. is way out in front." Indeed, since 1982, U.S. industrial production has almost silently risen over 26 percent, compared with Japan's 22 percent, West Germany's 11.6 percent, and Europe's 8.8 percent.

Table 1
Economic Growth Trends
in Two 5-Year Periods

	1975-80	1982-87
Real GNP Growth Total	% 18.3	% 19.8
Per Year	3.4	3.7
Real Disposable Income		
Total	% 14.6	% 18.3
Per Capita	8.7	12.9
Annual p/c	1.7	2.5

Source: U. S. Commerce Department
Bureau of Economic Analysis

How many undeserved radar tickets were issued last year?

a) 1,012,317 **b)** 649,119 **c)** 0 **d)** No one knows

Unfortunately, the answer is **d)** No one knows. Over ten million tickets were issued last year. Some experts say up to thirty percent of them were incorrect.

Here's why

You may find this hard to believe, but traffic radar doesn't tell the operator which vehicle he is clocking. The radar unit displays one number. That's all. It might be the closest car, it might be the fastest car, it might be the biggest car. Or it might not. The operator has to decide.

And since radar operators are human, they don't always guess right. Even if only one percent of the tickets issued last year were wrong, that's *one hundred thousand undeserved tickets.*

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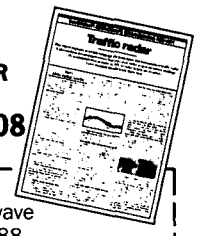

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In spite of this, thirty days before the crash, the *Washington Post*'s Hobart Rowen, who since 1983 has forecast three recessions, chimed in again with a major piece, "The Coming Unpleasant Recession," which followed by just a few days a similar dose of despair in the *New Yorker* by Columbia economist Robert Heilbroner, "Hard Times Ahead." All this, combined with apocalyptic predictions from Peter Peterson and John Kenneth Galbraith in successive issues of the *Atlantic*, created a near hurricane of horror and despair storming across the financial markets during August and September. No wonder the bull market started to collapse.

Meanwhile, we simultaneously discovered that the U.S. manufacturing economy was soaring into a boom. As First National Bank economist James Howell told me last September 15, "In the more than twenty years we have been tracking some 150 economic indicators, they have never looked so strong at once."

Nevertheless, as Black Monday demonstrated, the cumulative effect of this avalanche of apocalyptic augury can at least temporarily overwhelm even the strongest economic basics. Even Howell suddenly went from extreme bullishness in September to complete doomsdaying on October 20.

Economies, after all, like investors, are moved by attitudes and expectations about the future—more than by real measurements of the present. If the country is continually told its future is bleak, it will sooner or later lose its self-confidence and turn away from growth investment, and its markets will crash. And over the last seven years we have been told one lie about the U.S. economy after another:

The Myth of Declining Savings and Soaring Debt

Take, for example, the myth about the nation's supposedly declining savings rate, as simplistically measured by the Commerce Department, and our supposedly soaring debt burden. While our debt has indeed risen dramatically, even counting the crash, our financial wealth has (quietly) risen even faster, making us more solvent than ever before.

It may come as a surprise to discover that in 1986, U.S. financial wealth, as measured by the Federal Reserve "Flow of Funds" analysis, reached 244 percent of GNP—an all-time high, and up hugely from the 181.4 percent level of 1981. Even after the crash that figure remains over 240 percent.

Indeed, since 1980, U.S. financial wealth in constant 1982 dollars has soared 53.3 percent. In the 1970s that number rose only 17.6 percent. So the rise in the U.S. financial wealth under the Reagan Administration at over 7 percent a year, real, has been nearly five times the average 1.6 percent a year in the 1970s.

But what about our vast new debt to the rest of the world? Aside from the incredible overstatement of that "debt," most of it represents ready and willing investment in U.S. assets (property, factories, stocks, bonds, deposits in U.S. banks for factoring purposes) because the U.S. is now the world's hottest economy. Or as Joel Kotkin put it in the *Post*: "In fact, periods of heaviest foreign investment usually coincided with the most dynamic U.S. expansions, particularly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when American industrial prowess overcame that of all European competitors. After several decades of American capital flight to other parts of the world, the same process is now repeating itself. Faced with declining populations, high unemployment and anemic economic growth, European investors again consider the U.S. a good place to put their money." It may shock you to know that right now overseas investors hold less than 5 percent of U.S. financial assets.

Ironically, the single most important reason we are now a "debtor nation" (and have a big trade deficit) was the 1982 decision by U.S. banks to stop throwing good money after bad and reduce foreign lending from $110 billion a year to less than $2 billion in 1985. This alone, and not the influx of new credit, turned our "net creditor" position into the current net "debtor" position. And it was this sudden sharp shift from creditor to debtor that was the main stimulus for exploding the trade deficit.

One reason the recovery has been so "silent" is that it has been fueled not by the big noisy corporations, but by an entrepreneurial boom in smaller businesses.

Last January, President Reagan told a Cleveland audience that "trade deficits and inflows of foreign capital are not necessarily a sign of an economy's weakness. They are more often a sign of strength." This immediately caused stifled smirks on the part of the know-nothing network newsfolk. CBS's Jacqueline Adams told her viewers, "Of course few economists or investors agree with that view." In fact there are virtually no serious economists, left to right, who *don't* agree with it. The last time we had a merchandise trade surplus was in 1975, when unemployment was over 9 percent—and the last time our current account was in surplus was in the 1980-81 recessions.

The Myth of Lost Competitiveness

All of which explodes still another myth—namely the supposed decline in U.S. competitiveness. Last summer, Britain's prestigious National Institute of Economic and Social Research published a study showing that the U.S. now has the most competitive labor costs in the world. (See Table 2.)

This, more than the falling dollar, explains why U.S. exports are soaring (merchandise exports alone are rising at a 30 percent rate), and why our manufacturing production is now rising at a humongous 6.4 percent annual rate—the fastest of the major industrial nations—while Japan is now importing its own cars from the U.S.

Table 2
U. S. Labor Competitiveness

Relative Unit Labor Cost Indexes
In Dollar Terms (U. S. =100)

	1980	1987 (June)
U. S.	100.0	100.0
Japan	89.1	142.4
W. Germany	141.3	193.3
France	137.0	118.2
Italy	134.8	153.9
United Kingdom	217.4	185.1

Source: National Institute of Economic and Social Research London

Yet last April former president Jimmy Carter was allowed to get away with holding a national seminar in Atlanta, Georgia, on the subject of "restoring U.S. competitiveness." At the moment the conference began the U.S. was registering the sixty-sixth month of the greatest rise in industrial competitiveness of any period since World War II, as the Labor Department reported that manufacturing productivity rose by a solid 2.9 percent annual rate in the first quarter of 1988—buttressed by a stunning 33 percent annualized rise in capital spending on new plant and equipment.

At the same time, unit labor costs—the key ingredient in our world competitiveness—actually *fell* at a one percent annual rate, following a nearly 2 percent fall for all of 1987.

This means that as of the latest quarter, U.S. productivity stands 29 percent higher than in 1981, when President Carter left office, for an average annual rise of 4.2 percent a year—the greatest and most prolonged rise in U.S. history.

At the same time, unit labor costs in manufacturing as of the last quarter stand nearly one percent *lower* than in 1981. This is the most stunning reduction in relative labor costs for any nation in the last twenty years, except Japan—and even Japan has barely matched our own performance since 1982. And when you factor in the 40 percent drop in the dollar's relative exchange rate against our biggest competitors, the improvement is even more remarkable. As Irwin Jacobs, chairman of MINSTAR, said on "Wall Street Week" last January: "This country has never been better postured from an industrial side to flourish."

The Myth of Exporting Jobs

Ironically, as a result of our soaring competitiveness, and our sudden export boom, the greatest danger facing the country today is not "exporting jobs," as the political myth goes, but

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increasing labor shortages. Since 1982, our employment has grown three times as fast as Japan's and ten times as fast as Europe's.

A year ago this July, I warned that labor shortages could mean a serious 1988-89 inflation surge. I pointed out that over the last twelve months the sixteen- to nineteen-year-old labor force had *fallen* 2.4 percent, and since 1980 had fallen nearly 15 percent, and that our working-age population grew only 7 percent while jobs grew 13.1 percent.

So even though soaring labor force participation rates for women and blacks have helped offset this "birth dearth," we are now close to full employment in this country with our employment ratio at a world-record 62.3 percent of our adult population.

In a nation where employment continues to grow at 2-3 percent a year, the working age population (16-65) is now growing only one percent per year. This is why, contrary to all the political hype of a "stagnant economy," the nation's help-wanted advertising index remains (quietly) stuck in the record 155-160 range.

The Myth of Low-Paying Jobs

Of all the lies about the Reagan recovery, none has been more egregious than the Democrats' charge that most of the 15 million new jobs have been for "hamburger flippers." The best proof of the fraudulent nature of this argument is Michael Dukakis's Massachusetts. Over the last four years, it has lost over 96,000 manufacturing jobs, 14 percent of its entire industrial job base, even as the U.S. gained 2 percent. Yet the state's per capita income has been *rising* 40 percent faster than even the nation's powerful rate.

This completely debunks organized labor's notion that a move toward a service-sector economy means "low-paying jobs." In fact, over the last twelve months, the Labor Department reports that 63 percent of all new jobs were "Managerial and Professional," its highest paying and skills category, while only one percent were in "service occupations."

The "McJobs" nonsense was first advanced in December 1986 by Big Labor's economic propagandists, economists Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison (B/H), who contended that nearly 60 percent of all new jobs during 1979-84 were "low pay."

Yet, as a Labor Department analysis of B/H's own unpublished data base later showed, since 1981, nearly 47 percent of all new jobs were "high pay," and only a tiny 7 percent were low pay; moreover, the trend toward higher pay *increases* as you come forward in years, and when you use the more reliable Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) deflator (instead of the over-hyped CPI), the trend toward high-pay jobs has been stunning.

Table 3
The Low Pay Jobs Myth Debunked

Percent of New Jobs by Income Grouping Constant Pay Levels	1975-78	1982-85
Using the CPI Deflator		
Low Pay	% 18.7	% 8.3
Medium Pay	44.4	33.1
High Pay	36.9	58.6
Using the PCE Deflator		
Low Pay	% 18.7	% −12.8
Medium Pay	39.9	32.8
High Pay	41.4	80.0

Source: Bluestone Harrison JEC Study
Labor Department Analysis
PCE data points supplied

The single most important reason why we are now a "debtor" nation was the 1982 decision by U.S. banks to reduce foreign lending from $110 billion a year to less than $2 billion in 1985.

The Myth of the Disappearing Dream

But the best proof that the low-paying jobs thesis was bunkum came last summer, when the Census Bureau's report on family income and poverty showed not only a 4.2 percent rise in median family income in 1986 (the largest rise since 1972), but also that since 1981 median family income in real dollars had risen by 9.1 percent. (In the Carter budget years 1977-81, it *fell* by 6.8 percent!)

Indeed, one of the biggest problems now facing the Democrats is that from 1981 to 1986, real per capita disposable income rose 12.3 percent, or a little over 2.3 percent per year, more than double the 1.0 percent a year during the Carter budget years.

Figures like these explain why one of the nation's leading political-economic theorists, professor Ray Fair of Yale, predicted last September that the Republicans would win by 54 to 46 percent in 1988, based on his econometric model which has successfully "predicted" most elections since World War II. Even since the crash, Fair's update picks the Republicans by 52-48.

Critics scoffed at President Reagan's 1988 State of the Union contention that the American dream has been restored—but the Census income data clearly bear him out. They show that the main reason why incomes are rising again is that *all* groups are "trading up" to higher incomes, after "trading down" during the late 1970s.

Table 4
Income Trends

	Carter 1977-81	Reagan 1981-86
Median Family Income	% −6.8	% +9.1
Per year + +	−1.7	+1.8
Average Weekly Wage	−10.0	+0.5
Per year	−2.6	+0.1
Per Capita Disposable Inc.	+4.1	+12.3
Per year	+1.0	+2.3

Source: Census Bureau—Bureau of Economic Analysis

From 1977-81, the percentage of families with incomes under $12,500 (constant 1986 dollars) *rose* from 34.7 percent to 36.6 percent for blacks, and from 13.9 to 15.9 percent for whites. But, since 1981, that picture was reversed, as the low-income percentage for blacks *fell* from 36.6 percent to 33.5 percent, and for whites back to 14.7 percent.

At the same time, even as these families were moving back to the middle class, the middle class itself was losing even larger numbers to the upper-income brackets above $50,000. From 1981 to 1986, the share of white families with incomes over $50,000 shot up from 16.6 percent to 22.0 percent, a huge 33 percent rise—offsetting a 7 percent drop from 1977-81.

But the most striking progress was made by blacks, whose share of families over $50,000 rose from 7.1 percent to 12 percent, an impressive 69 percent rise, after a 12.3 percent loss during 1977-81. What is happening, then, is that even as the low incomes are moving up, the middle is "vanishing" upwards.

The Myth of America's Falling Living Standard

Which brings us to the final myth, perpetrated by the otherwise sensible *Economist*, namely that our "faltering growth in the standard of living is not the stuff dreams are made on, certainly not the American Dream."

Yet an analysis by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) shows that "living standards in the U.S. continue to soar well above those of other Western countries." Using what they call "purchasing power parities" (PPP), OECD found that not only is U.S. real per capita GNP 10 percent ahead of its nearest competitor (Canada), it is 41 percent ahead of Japan, 33 percent ahead of West Germany, and 51 percent ahead of Great Britain, a clear proof that we remain competitive, with real U.S. PPP income rising another 4.3 percent in 1986 over 1985.

All in all, when you consider that the U.S. has created nearly 90 percent of all the new jobs in the Western world since 1980, this upward income performance in an era of exploding competition has been nothing short of incredible—and another testament to the fact that the U.S. economy, despite all its creaks and groans, continues to be a miraculous (if awfully quiet) success, and especially over the last five years when it has consistently outdone the world on every other indicator possible.

The question now is: Will presidential candidate George Bush turn the economic boom into a political bust by running away from the President who helped to create it? □

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Terence P. Jeffrey

THE STUFF ON WRIGHT

Old Dirty Paws reaches into oil, shaky banks, belles-lettres, and much, much more.

On the evening of July 7, 1948, on a country road in Parker County, Texas, a Chevy sedan pulled to a stop in front of an isolated farmhouse. Eugene Miller, a candidate for the local seat in the state assembly, stepped out his door to see who'd come calling.

"Is this Eugene Miller?" asked a voice from the darkness. Before Miller could answer, his visitor drew a .45 caliber pistol and opened fire. Miller collapsed on the lawn with a lead slug embedded below his heart and another in his right leg; his attacker escaped in the Chevy.

Later that night, dying in the local hospital, Miller could not identify his assassin. Nonetheless, he was sure it was a "left-winger," a Communist "henchman"—a claim which some imaginative locals later interpreted as pointing a finger at Miller's principal opponent, incumbent Assemblyman Jim Wright. And even though Wright magnanimously showed up to donate blood, as the challenger's pulse beat down to nothing, so did the incumbent's chances for re-election.

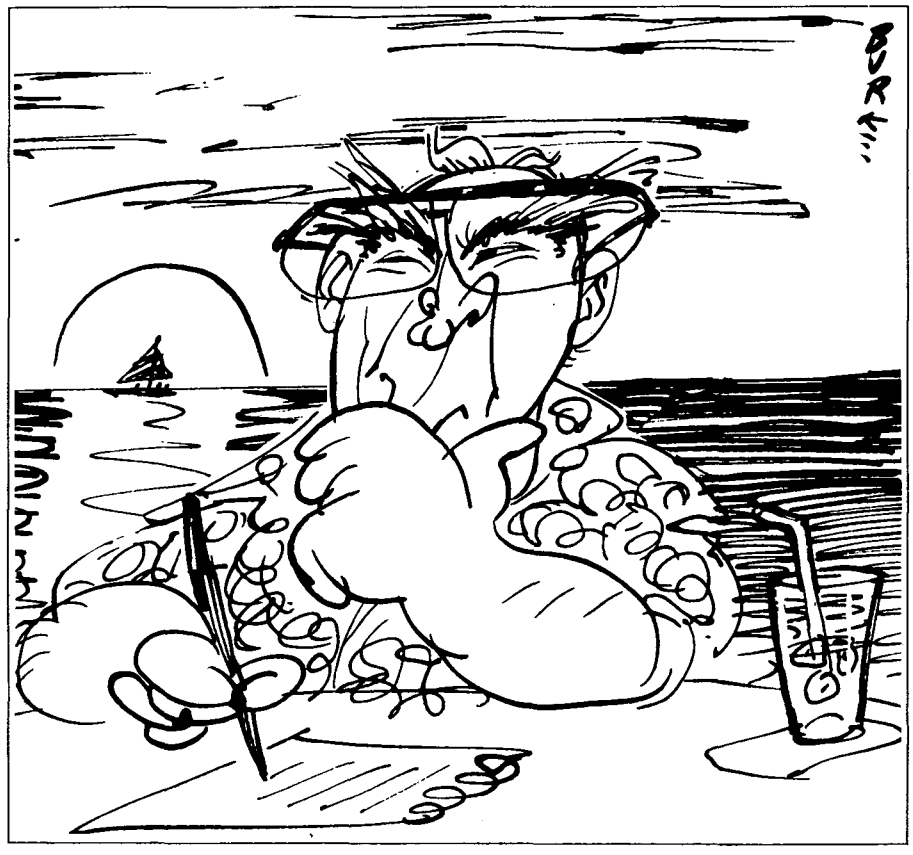
Soon after Miller's murder a neighboring farmer named J. A. Coalson claimed that he had seen Jim Wright in a nearby field practicing with a pistol. Wright denied the story. He admitted being in the field, but said that what Coalson mistook for gunshots was actually the twanging of wires as he tacked a campaign poster onto a telephone pole. Ballistic tests performed on a handgun confiscated from Wright's home proved that it was not the murder weapon, and investigators fruitlessly shifted their attentions elsewhere. To this day, the crime has not been solved.

In 1986, the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* interviewed George Roach, a Texas Ranger who investigated the case for twenty-five years and is not too proud to admit he never got his man. Roach said that "[Wright] was clear. I never could find anything to tie to him." But in the weeks immediately after Miller's murder, subtle distinctions like guilt and innocence were lost on Parker County voters. Two days before the election, Wright's surviving opponent, a mild-mannered teacher named Floyd Bradshaw, ran an advertisement in the local newspaper condemning . . . Communism. Wright responded the next day with his own ad celebrating the "Southern tradition of segregation." Bradshaw won by thirty-nine votes.

Jim Wright has the manner of a Lyndon Baines Johnson and the luck of a Richard Nixon. He's a good old boy, a Southwest wanna-be cowboy, who can, if he needs to, shake off the boots, drop his hat in the vestibule, put on a silk tie, and preach to a born-again congregation with evangelical sincerity. At the same time, his political career has been pocked with ethical and legal near-misses—from which he has always come back smiling.

In 1950, two years after losing his state assembly seat, he ran for the mayorship of Weatherford, his home town, and won. Four years later, not yet thirty-two years old, he decided to run against Wingate Lucas, the Fort Worth Democratic establishment's happy incumbent congressman.

This time as the Democratic primary approached, Wright's activities attracted the attention of federal investigators. In late June, the Post Office Department filed a complaint against Wright and his father alleging that they had masterminded "a scheme for obtaining money through the mails." The charge was that the Wrights had signed an affidavit in 1947 promising to "refrain from using the United States mail for the purpose of conducting or carrying on any alleged lottery," but that Wright's business, the national Trades Day Association, did exactly that. Wright was subpoenaed to appear before a postal investigator in Washington the day of the Texas primary. Wright's defense was not to deny that he and his father had been running a "scheme for obtaining money through the mails" that worked very much like a lottery, but that such activity was not actually illegal and that the call for an investigation was politically motivated. His lawyers petitioned the postal service to cancel the hearing because they claimed, first, that "the violation of an affidavit, even if proven, is not an offense," and second, that "the appearance of newspapermen so soon after formal filing [of the complaint] is not only unusual but smacks of an attempt on the part of persons unknown in the government service to maliciously and wantonly smear" Jim Wright.



Wright won a half victory: the postal service agreed to postpone the hearing until after the election. But then Wright beat Lucas—campaigning as a young uncorrupted David, slaying the establishment's pet Goliath—and the Democrats swept the fall elections. The postal investigation was lost in the political shuffle.

Jim Wright's next major ethics conflict did not come until 1977 when, as House majority leader and Tip O'Neill's heir apparent, he saw his power and influence in the Congress become greater than anyone's save his Irish Bostonian mentor's. This time, suffering financial hardship resulting from failed business ventures and alimony payments to his first wife—whom he had discarded in 1972—Wright used $48,000 in campaign contributions to pay off personal debts, and then withdrew another $48,000 to

Terence P. Jeffrey, an editorial writer at the Washington Times, *has been investigating the Jim Wright affair since June 1987. Stephanie Nall contributed research to this article.*

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pay the income taxes on the first. Wright then and now defends this action by pointing out that it was not illegal—at the time.

The very same year Tip O'Neill was pushing through new ethics laws that would limit the outside income congressmen could earn through honoraria and would make it illegal for congressmen to convert campaign funds to personal use.

As Wright ascended toward the speakership, his power and arrogance grew in equal measure. Unlike O'Neill, he was not at all avuncular in persuading his Democratic colleagues to do it his way; and in a Texas tradition dating back to Sen. Joe Bailey and continuing through House Speaker and Vice President "Cactus Jack" Garner and President Lyndon Johnson, Wright never hesitated to use his Washington influence to benefit his friends, relatives, and business partners back in the Lone Star state.

One incident in late 1987 stands out as emblematic of the Wright style. The House was voting on a $12 billion tax bill that the Speaker had pushed. At the end of the 15-minute voting period, the bill had seemingly lost 206-207. But rather than record the vote, Wright suspended the proceedings. His chief legislative aide, John Mack, physically cornered Rep. Jim Chapman, a moderate-to-conservative Democrat from Sam Rayburn's old district, who with great financial assistance from Wright's friends and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) had just barely scraped past a Republican challenger in a special election in 1985.

In a few minutes Mack, who is sometimes derisively called Mack the Knife because of his 1973 conviction for having slashed a woman, beaten her with a hammer, and left her to bleed in an automobile, somehow found a way to convince Chapman that he really should support the $12 billion tax hike. Mack escorted Chapman to the Speaker's podium, the voting was reopened, Chapman changed his vote, the voting was closed. The Speaker won.

In the long run, however, the Speaker may lose. His unbending partisanship, his parliamentary machinations, and his intrusions into foreign policy, highlighted by the campaign to defund the Nicaraguan resistance, have elicited an unprecedented antipathy from the minority party. Some Republicans feel not merely disenfranchised, but mocked in their disformity. The only weapons of vengeance available to them have been provided by the Speaker himself: a political life replete with shadowy dealings, and a Democratic party moved only by partisan loyalty to protect a leader too oily to embrace.

On June 10, the six Democrats and six Republicans on the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct (also known as the Ethics Committee) voted unanimously to investigate six charges that the Speaker violated House rules or ethical standards, the first such investigation of a sitting speaker in American history. One charge, generated by confusing language on the Speaker's financial disclosure statements, has already been more or less dropped. Of the others, one involves Wright's efforts on behalf of a billionaire Texas oil clan, with whom the Speaker shared some investments; another concerns his free use of a condominium owned by a business partner who could have benefited from legislation moved by the Speaker in 1985-86; and another his dealings with the Federal Home Loan Bank Board on behalf of two insolvent Texas thrifts. The final two regard the composition, publication, and sale of the Speaker's unusual memoirs. These are the stories behind the charges:

Wright's political career has been pocked with ethical and legal near-misses—from which he has always come back smiling.

THE OIL MAN

In early 1979, Richard Montcrief, a Texas oil magnate and long-time friend of Wright's, asked the House majority leader to join him and other members of the Montcrief family in a natural gas well being sunk in East Texas. Wright signed on and it proved to be a profitable move. In 1980, his financial disclosure statements revealed that he had already made between $5,000 and $15,000 on the deal and that his investment in the well was valued between $15,000 and $50,000. He continued to draw income from the deal until 1987 when he sold his interest for between $15,000 and $50,000.

Also in early 1979, Monty Montcrief (Richard's father) asked Jim Wright if he would like to invest in two additional oil wells. Over the next nine years Wright's financial disclosure statements claim that he made between $50,000 and $205,000 from one of these wells.

What made these deals so interesting was that after they had been set, Jim Wright personally lobbied Egyptian President Anwar Sadat on Richard Montcrief's behalf. Montcrief had invested $130 million in oil wells in Israeli-occupied Sinai and was fearful that following the Camp David Accords, the Egyptian government would nationalize his property. On March 27, the day after Sadat and Begin signed the accords in Washington, the House majority leader confronted the Egyptian president at the Capitol and handed him a letter pleading Montcrief's case. The wells were nationalized anyway.

Wright says now that he is bewildered that people would draw a connection between his investments with the Montcriefs and his efforts to save their Sinai oil wells. In a brief submitted to the Ethics Committee this June, Wright demurely claims that it "was entirely natural and proper for me, as Congressman for the 12th District of Texas, to assist my constituent, Richard Montcrief."

Since January 1987, when he stepped into Tip O'Neill's cavernous shoes, the national press has been tracing Wright's footsteps with greater attention to the sort of mud he leaves behind. Revelations arising from three scandals in particular now threaten to put an early end to his speakership.

THE STOCKYARDS

In 1985-86, Wright used amendments tacked onto the budget appropriations for the Army Corps of Engineers and the Economic Development Administration to funnel $26.8 million into the development of the Fort Worth Stockyards district. The *Fort Worth Star Telegram* reported that George Mallick, the Speaker's business partner, was also a partner in Triad Corporation. Triad was the company which owned Billy Bob's Texas, the largest honky tonk in the world, and also the principal concession and landholder in Fort Worth's delapidated Stockyards district. The *Washington Times* reported that Bill Beuck, the titular head of Triad Corporation, made (with his wife) an $11,000 contribution to Wright's campaign and had helped H. Ross Perot, Jr. secure federal grants through Wright's intercession.

Mallick told the *Star Telegram* that he had a deal with Billy Bob Barnett, the nightclub eponym: if Mallick could find $100 million in financing to develop Barnett's Stockyards land, and adjacent land for which Barnett held options, Barnett would give Mallick a share of the development. Bill Beuck, like Mallick, had been brought in to help Barnett find financing to develop his land. As Perot told the *Washington Times*, Beuck had a reputation for being "great at economic development." Mr. Beuck became the chairman of "Triad Corporation."

After signing on with Barnett, Beuck started talking up the idea of damming Marine Creek—which runs through the Billy Bob property—making it into a recreational lake. His idea was to build a "Western theme park" around this would-be body of water. In 1986 he brought the idea to the Fort Worth city council, and a bond issue was put on the November ballot. It failed.

According to Russell Lancaster, a Fort Worth city councilman, Beuck and Barnett showed up at a council meeting in early 1986 accompanying an official from the Economic Development Agency. They announced to a startled council that good old Jim Wright had secured a $4.5 million grant (later reduced to $4.3 million) for the Fort Worth Stockyards, but that the money could not be paid out until the city carried through on the formalities of actually applying to the EDA for the grant. Lancaster told the *Washington Times* he had never heard of the grant before the meeting, and supported his claim by producing a January 21, 1986 memorandum from the mayor's office. The memorandum, signed by City Manager Bob Terrell, describes Billy Bob's contributions to the redevelopment of the Stockyards district and concludes: "This grant is classified as a 'demonstration' grant, so no City match is required. Although the funds have been made available, the City must still follow the normal application process in order to receive them. The inclusion of this allocation is the direct result of Triad Corporation working closely with Congressman Jim Wright's office."

When asked about this memo, Wright's chief of staff, Marshall Lynam, denied that the Speaker had worked directly with Bill Beuck, George Mallick, or anyone else at Triad to secure the grants. Lynam produced a letter from Fort Worth Mayor Bob Bolen dated September 17, 1985, which thanks Wright for his previous support of the Stockyards development, and reminds him that "we do, however, need the continued involvement of the Federal Government." The mayor's letter, however, was not an application for an EDA grant, and was sent without the knowledge of the city council.

The next year Wright wrote another $7.5 million EDA grant for the Stockyards development into the final draft of the continuing resolution. Because of a cutback in the size of the original grant—which had not been disbursed—by the spring of 1987, the EDA was holding $11.8 million, nearly ten percent of its annual public works grants authority, which could go no place but the Fort Worth Stockyards. Then in August, the *Washington Times* reported that Jim Wright had written an amendment into the fiscal year 1987 continuing resolution that directed the Army Corps of Engineers to "eliminate

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flood damage in the historical stockyards along Tony's Creek and Marine Creek." As many in Fort Worth interpreted it, Jim Wright had found the money to build Bill Beuck's lake.

In a telephone interview, chief of staff Lynam contested this conclusion.

On March 11, 1987, the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* published a story further tying the Speaker's business partner, George Mallick, to the EDA grants, reporting that the Fort Worth City Council was forming a corporation to loan the grants to Mallick as seed money for a 20,000-seat amphitheater to be built on the property Triad held an option for.

But an August 6, 1987 memorandum from Hugh Farmer, the Texas regional director of the EDA, put an even stranger spin on the three grants. The memorandum describes an unofficial meeting with a group of Fort Worth city council members that included Mayor Bolen but not Republican councilman Russell Lancaster, who had been critical of the grants. At the meeting the mayor and his cohorts first suggested that some of the $11.8 million being held by the EDA could be used to buy "several of the facilities at the Stockyards from the private owners." Farmer informed the mayor that this was impossible because "there would be a natural suspicion that the use of grant funds for property acquisition would be a 'bailout' of the private developer and the banks holding the mortgages on these properties."

Thoughts on a Mexican Sunset

I stood and watched the sun descend
To ocean's rim past Acapulco Bay
And felt I must be nature's friend
Thus entertained in such a regal way
(To take it in one almost had to pray).

Each moment's change brought new delight
As color blends from pink to gold to grey
Rent clouds with hues new to my sight;
To capture all the things they had to say,
I would have had to start on yesterday.

I thought how often in my life,
Preoccupied with busy things to do,
I've missed the glory now so rife;
Not looking, I have lost the chance to view
What can't be reproduced again, anew.

Like lives, each sunset is unique
(No two've been quite the same since time began);
We lose whene'er we fail to seek
The beauty cloistered in each fellow man;
We ought to try to see it if we can.

Just so, we ought to pause and drink
The loveliness in each of nature's days,
And not allow one sun to sink
Unseen, unsung, its power to amaze
Unnoted; God unthanked for pinks and greys.

From Reflections of a Public Man, *by Jim Wright, Madison Publishing Company, 1984, $5.95 paper.*

In fact, the specific properties mentioned were the Livestock Exchange Building, the Exhibits Building, a parking lot, and some abandoned cattle pens. Triad Corporation owned the parking lot and the Exhibits Building with a $3 million mortgage from Landmark S&L, and held an option on the other properties. They also were defaulting on a $3 million loan that had been taken out to finance improvements at Billy Bob's and were sinking rapidly toward bankruptcy. A Fort Worth lobbyist, familiar with the negotiations between Triad and the city, claims that Triad intended an elaborate maneuver in which they would take $8 million from the city, purchase their option on the Livestock Exchange Building, and then sell the building to the city for a profit. Farmer's refusal to sanction the EDA grants in this turnover foiled the deal.

As a second option, Mayor Bolen and company suggested that the city could use part of the $11.8 million in EDA money for $5 million the city was required to put up to qualify for the $15 million Jim Wright had set aside for "flood control." The EDA wouldn't budge on this one, either.

Orson Swindle, the hard-nosed former POW who directs the EDA, exchanged fire with Jim Wright, but held the line on disbursing grants that totally bypassed the competitive processes legally outlined in the Public Works and Economic Development Act. But the colorful drama of the Stockyards grants drew attention to Jim Wright's unorthodox partnership with Triad financier George Mallick.

In 1979, when congressmen were first compelled to file disclosure statements detailing their sources of income, Wright and his wife put together a holding company—Mallightco—in partnership with George Mallick and his wife. Mrs. Wright also was paid a salary by Mallick Properties, Mallick's development company, from 1979 to 1985. Although House rules specifically state that members must reveal the "underlying assets" of all holding companies on their financial disclosure statement, for six years as House majority leader and one as Speaker, Jim Wright simply ignored the rule. Finally this March, he amended the statements to reveal Mallightco's holding. The company's most lucrative venture is selling loose gemstones.

There was one other area where the Speaker finally buckled to media pressure and changed his relationship with George Mallick. In September 1985, the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* revealed that during 1979-85, Wright and his wife had lived rent-free first in a Mallick-owned apartment, then in a Mallick-owned luxury condominium. Both Wright and Mallick claimed that the arrangement was partial compensation to Mrs. Wright for her work with Mallick Properties. But after the story appeared in the *Star Telegram*, Mallick began charging the Wrights a $21 per diem for the nights they actually slept in the condominium. The rest of the month the House majority leader and his wife stored their furniture and clothes in the condo free of charge. Wright told the paper that the arrangement was "not a gift," and therefore violated no ethics standard.

The free condo is another of the questions the Ethics Committee is investigating.

THE S&LEAZE

In September 1986, Jim Wright placed a call to Federal Home Loan Bank Board (FHLBB) Chairman Edwin Gray to discuss a series of loan foreclosures that the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation (FSLIC) was bringing against Craig Hall, a Texas land developer. According to Phil Duncan, Wright's assistant chief of staff, Gray refused to do anything to interfere with the actions of the FSLIC conservator running Westwood Savings and Loan, the thrift that was foreclosing on Hall. But for some reason, in October Gray called back the Speaker-to-be. He apologized for his earlier intransigence and said that he had removed the Westwood's conservator and would work a deal with Hall. Before saying goodbye, Gray implored Wright to give him a call anytime he heard complaints about the Federal Home Loan Bank Board.

Wright did just that. In a June 22, 1987 interview with the *New York Times*, William Black, an FHLBB attorney who investigated the massive insolvency problems in the Texas thrift industry, claimed that in the late fall of 1986 and into the winter of 1987 the Speaker made a series of calls to Gray trying to get him to reconsider bringing a suit against Thomas Gaubert, the principal owner of the Independent American S&L of Dallas. The suit alleged that Gaubert had fraudulently mismanaged the thrift.

Gaubert was not unknown to Wright. One prominent figure in the Texas thrift industry who doesn't believe Wright has done anything wrong in his dealings with the FHLBB attributes all of the Speaker's problems in the savings and loan scandals to Gaubert's fast-talking wheeling and dealing. "Gaubert," says this fellow Texas good old boy, "liked to go around leaving the impression that he could deliver the Speaker anytime, anywhere, that he had some sort of power over the man. No one really believed it. We knew he was good at raising campaign money and selling houses, but he didn't know anything about running a savings and loan. He thought Washington worked like a Texas real estate deal; he was too dumb to matter to a guy like Wright."

On the other hand, in 1985 Gaubert and his 19-year-old son Michael, a freshman at SMU, donated $14,000 to the "Wright Appreciation Fund." And in 1986 Gaubert worked with Wright's ally, Rep. Tony Coelho, as the finance co-chairman of the DCCC.

At the same time Wright was talking with Ed Gray about Gaubert problems, he was fighting to kill a bill that would pump a $15 billion recapitalization into the tottering FSLIC. Even this sum was ludicrously small. Estimates on the cost of cleaning up the nation's insolvent thrifts were already climbing toward $40 billion.

Wright's assistant chief of staff Phil Duncan told the *Washington Times* on July 21, 1987, that Wright also spoke to Ed Gray about a planned FSLIC takeover of Vernon S&L, which was operated by Don Dixon, another Dallas real estate developer. Duncan claimed that Wright did not know Dixon and spoke with Gray on his behalf only because another congressman, whom Duncan would not name, asked the Speaker to do so. Gray, for his part, agreed to postpone the takeover; and between the Speaker's phone call and March, when Vernon was finally closed down, Dixon cranked out additional millions in bad loans.

Although Wright says that to this day he has never met Dixon, in 1986 he took a number of flights on an airplane owned by Dixon's S&L. Also, in 1985-6 the DCCC used a yacht—the refurbished sister ship of the former presidential yacht *Sequoia*—for a series of campaign fundraisers. Neither Wright nor the DCCC listed the air travel or the yacht chartering on their

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Federal Election Commission-required "debts and obligations" until their use was revealed last June in the *American Banker*. On July 1, the DCCC meekly forked over $48,150 for the yacht and plane chartering to the FSLIC, which had finally taken control of Vernon. The Speaker's man Duncan justified the oversight later that month, telling the *Washington Times* that Wright had not only not known who owned the plane he traveled on but was unaware that no one had paid for his seat.

Under pressure from the White House, the Speaker finally acquiesced to an $11 billion compromise recapitalization for the FSLIC.

The House Ethics Committee is now investigating whether the Speaker put unwarranted pressure on the FHLBB on either Dixon's or Gaubert's behalf. In his brief to the committee, the Speaker claims that in dealing directly with FHLBB Chairman Ed Gray, he was "clearly acting as a 'go-between' for some constituents who were being treated unfairly." In a recent interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, Gray characterized it somewhat differently, claiming that Wright had tried to pressure him into firing Joe Selby, the regulatory officer of the Federal Home Loan Bank in Dallas. The Speaker denies it.

How did Jimmy Hoffa's bagman become Jim Wright's publisher?

THE FRIEND

How did Jimmy Hoffa's bagman become Jim Wright's publisher? The question has more political sex appeal than the others raised about the Speaker's ethics, and it may prove more damaging to his credibility.

In 1967, before Jimmy Hoffa went to jail, he made William Carlos Moore, one of Jim Wright's oldest friends, the national director of DRIVE PAC, the Teamsters' political organization. In 1971, when President Nixon commuted Hoffa's sentence, Moore resigned the position and returned to Fort Worth, where he reportedly went into private business.

But in 1973 he returned to Washington, this time to work not for the Teamsters, but for the government. He joined Jim Wright's staff as an aide assigned to the National Commission on Water Quality.

While Moore toiled with the future House Speaker to protect the quality of American drinking water, federal investigators were looking into his activities on behalf of Jimmy Hoffa. The government had evidence that Moore had skimmed more than $90,000 from DRIVE PAC between 1968 and 1970. They could prove that he had deposited the money in a Crofton, Maryland checking account, that he had written checks on that account to the Union Travel Associates of Washington, D.C., and that this travel agency had kicked the money back to Moore. The trail came to a dead end, however, when the cash dropped into Moore's wallet. By early 1975, federal investigators realized that Moore would just as soon go to jail as reveal the final destination of the slush fund money. So on March 18, they made a deal: If Moore would plead guilty to one count of tax evasion for $32,000 embezzled in 1970, the government would refrain from prosecuting him for any "use (or misuse) of the funds of the Teamsters' Union Political Organization."

The government also agreed to ask the sentencing judge to incarcerate Moore for no more than six months and to remove from public record the pre-sentencing report which includes all the evidence that had been accumulated concerning Moore's association with Hoffa.

Still, this was not enough for Moore and his new boss. On March 24, 1975, two days before Moore was due to be sentenced, Jim Wright sat down at a typewriter and wrote the judge a letter on his official congressional letterhead. Splotched with white-out and poorly typed, it reads: "It is my desire to take this opportunity to lend my personal support to Mr. William Carlos Moore. I am aware of the basic factors and circumstances concerning the matter before your honor today and it is in the face of this knowledge that I write to you on Mr. Moore's behalf. . . . It is my opinion that his character and his value to his community is far above the average. It is without reservation that I now ask the court, on Mr. Moore's behalf, to take into consideration the obvious value to us all of Mr. Moore's continued presence in our communities."

Jim Wright was not alone in seeking clemency for Moore. At the sentencing, the prosecuting attorney produced an affidavit from Jimmy Hoffa. The affidavit confirmed that Moore had unselfishly created and disbursed a slush fund at Hoffa's direction, that Moore had not used any of the money for his own enrichment, and that every single dime had been illegally paid out to politicians. Unmoved, the judge gave Moore six months in the federal pen. Four months later, Jimmy Hoffa disappeared. Six months after that, having done his time, Carlos Moore began working for Jim Wright as a campaign contractor.

THE PUBLISHER

Between 1976 and 1987, Jim Wright's campaign committees paid Carlos Moore approximately $656,000 for services ranging from printing "auto stickers and yard signs" to "political consultations." In the 1984 election cycle, when Jim Wright ran unopposed in both the primary and general elections, and paid no money in campaign staff salaries, he paid Carlos Moore $68,000. More than a third of this money was for something called "professional services." On November 1, 1984, a few days before the House majority leader took 100 percent of the vote in an uncontested election, Carlos Moore's Madison Publishing Company brought out its first book. It was Jim Wright's now-famous *Reflections of a Public Man*. Moore had agreed to pay for the printing of 20,000 copies of the book, to sell them for $5.95, and deliver $3.25 of that sum back to the Speaker. In 1985-86, Wright's campaign committees paid Moore $305,000 for services rendered, and Moore paid Wright $55,600 in book royalties.

The deal revealed, more than anything else, that within the soul of Jim Wright, the majority leader, there still lurked the entrepreneurial heart that put him in trouble with the Post Office Department back in 1954.

There is only one bookstore anywhere in the world—Barber's in Fort Worth—that ever regularly stocked *Reflections* on its shelves. Larue Perkins, the wife of Barber's owner Brian Perkins, expressed befuddlement upon hearing that the book had earned Jim Wright more than $55,000 in royalties. "That li'l thing?" she said. "That li'l paperback thing? That just doesn't sound right. We couldn't have sold more than forty or so copies. And we had them all signed by the Speaker himself."

Mr. Perkins elaborated: "In the whole run of that book, over three years, at the minimum we sold forty books; on the outside, the absolute maximum we sold was eighty."

The Perkinses, who take pride in the fact that Barber's stocks more "Texana" and local interest books than any other bookstore in the area, claim that they first learned about *Reflections of a Public Man* when a customer came in asking about it. They contacted the Speaker's regional office; the Speaker's staff put them in touch with Carlos Moore—whom Mrs. Perkins describes as a "hail-fellow-well-met sort of man." Between 1985 and 1987, Moore came by the store three or four times to drop off a dozen or so copies of the book. Mr. Perkins brought each shipment over to the Speaker's office at the Fort Worth Federal Building and several weeks later they would be returned inscribed by Jim Wright. Mr. Perkins's deal with Moore was to sell the books for $6.95 apiece, returning 60 percent of that, or $4.17, to Madison Printing Company.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported in May that Carlos Moore's old employer, the Teamsters' DRIVE PAC, had purchased 1,000 copies of the book, as did John C. White, the former chairman of the Democratic National Committee. In June, the *New York Times* found another 1,000-copy man in Gene Payte, a Fort Worth developer, who claimed that he knew it was illegal just to give money to the Speaker so he bought his book instead. Wright has since admitted that Texas lobbyist Leslie Berkowitz also bought 1,000 copies, that the Teamsters actually bought 2,000 copies, and that the New England Life Insurance Company took $2,000 worth. But that still leaves approximately 12,600 copies of *Reflections* that the Speaker was paid royalties for that weren't sold at Barber's.

The most damning thing about the Speaker's book, however, is the book itself. Pieced together by staff aide Matthew Cossolotto from old speeches, sermons, and a poem ("Thoughts on a Mexican Sunset"), it is a 117-page paperback, glued in a binding of oily paper that has something of the same texture as an old telefax or photocopy. Though it is astounding that Barber's bookstore even sold the handful it did, in a telephone interview Mr. Perkins attributed the bulk of his sales to the fact that the Speaker had signed each copy. He found it amusing that Willie Mays could get a better price for his autograph without even throwing in his book.

In the brief he presented to the Ethics Committee on June 10, the Speaker argued that no matter what subjective judgments people might want to make about his 55-percent royalty, it did not violate the laws restricting congressmen's outside income. Books like his *Reflections* were exempted from those limits. He even had the daring to compare his small winnings to those taken in by Tip O'Neill for his professionally ghost-written, nationally marketed, $19.95 *Man of the House*, which was published by Random House last year.

The Speaker is probably correct as to the legality of his little deal with Carlos Moore, but if he ever pauses to consider the ethics of the thing someone should refer him to page 84:

"Nobody has to tell you. You know. In the quiet recesses of your soul, a still small voice repeats the verdict in almost deafening tones. And no clamorous overplay of noisy self-justification can silence it." □

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Ambrose Evans-Pritchard

THE CONTRAS COULD HAVE WON

How U.S. policy snatched defeat from the jaws of victory.

At the beginning of this year there were signs of insurrectionary conditions in Nicaragua. I believe that if the contras had received American military aid for another two years the country would have become ungovernable. The Sandinista Front would have had to sue for peace on terms that effectively dismantled the one-party military state, or risk eventual collapse. This is impossible to prove. There are no polls in Nicaragua. There is no opposition movement like Solidarity that captures the imagination. And the overwhelming majority of Americans who know the country would disagree with me vehemently. Some still insist that the Sandinistas would win an open election in Nicaragua if it were held tomorrow.

It is easy to forget how strong Anastasio Somoza looked two years before the revolution. In 1977 he was able to fill the Plaza de la Republica with tens of thousands of seemingly enthusiastic supporters—more than the Sandinistas are able to turn out now. The country had the best educated managers and technocrats in Central America. Living standards had been rising rapidly for a generation, labor laws were relatively progressive, and even farm workers could afford transistor radios. True, Somoza had plenty of headaches. Archbishop Obando y Bravo, accused of being a Communist by the chief of police, was issuing damning pastoral letters. Pedro Joaquin Chamorro was publishing broadsides in his family newspaper *La Prensa*. Jimmy Carter's ambassador, Mauricio Solaun, was reading the riot act on human rights. Least among Somoza's troubles was a band of student guerrillas with connections to the Granada aristocracy, calling themselves Sandinistas. Their leader had been killed in 1976 and the quarreling factions were accusing each other of "putschist adventurism" and "petit bourgeois deviation." They did not look very dangerous. The lesson is that insurrectionary conditions are not always obvious. For some they will never be obvious. While units of the National Guard were fleeing to El Salvador on rafts in July 1979, Jim Wright continued to stand behind Somoza and was puzzled that everybody was turning against a stalwart American ally.

Gauging the mood in Nicaragua is difficult. The people dissemble, particularly with foreigners, some of whom they abusively call "sandalistas" on account of their footwear and politics. But it is possible to make them talk, provided you travel alone, without an interpreter, and don't wear Sandinista sympathies on your sleeve. All you have to do is drive along Managua's Carretera Sur, for example, and there will be the pathetic sight of thirty, fifty, perhaps even a hundred people trying to hitch a ride. Half-empty Ladas and Toyota landcruisers race past, carrying the party apparatchiks. They rarely stop. Occasionally buses come past. They don't stop either, because they already are jammed full. So if you pull over to offer a ride, these desperate creatures will fall like animals on your car, piling in from every door until you shout "basta ya," and heartlessly push the stragglers back into the dusty street.

I usually ask about the rice ration first. It is a subject that evokes fury in this culture where many families traditionally eat rice and beans twice a day. Before the revolution Nicaragua was a rice exporter. No longer. Now huge donations come from Bulgaria and the Soviet Union and there is still a critical shortage. The Sandinistas fixed the ration at four pounds per person per month. In reality it hovers between one and two pounds. "It doesn't last a week," scream the women from the back of the car, "and why isn't there any milk? We have to wait for three hours in the sun to get milk for our children and then they say it's run out." Next comes a barrage of recriminations about everything. I dare not repeat some of the amazing remarks I have heard, for fear of losing credibility. (Once when I quoted a Nicaraguan family saying that it hoped for an American invasion, the editor of *Private Eye* insinuated in print that I had made it up.)

The shortage of food was becoming serious by the beginning of this year. An emaciated old peasant in the area of Rivas said that his cooperative was reduced to two- or three-hour workdays. "By nine in the morning we just can't keep going, we're too weak from hunger." But on the whole, few Nicaraguans look starved. They probably get as much to eat as the British during the Second World War. The British, however, were disposed to suffer. In Nicaragua the sense of common purpose that makes such sacrifices tolerable has completely broken down. Even if the people believed that American imperialism was the cause of their troubles, which the majority no longer do, it would be hard to rally patriotic support when the hardships are so unevenly shared.

Nicaragua has the most regressive wage system I have ever seen. While inequalities in Honduras are ugly, in Nicaragua they are grotesque. This was not intended. It is the consequence of hyperinflation in an economy with fixed exchange rates. I remember that in early 1984 the purple 50 cordoba note could buy you breakfast at the Intercontinental Hotel in Managua. On a visit last January, I was surprised to find that the note was back in circulation with 50,000 clumsily printed

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over the old 50. The inflation rate was about 2000 percent, yet the Sandinistas were still holding the official exchange rate at 70 cordobas to the dollar, with a maddening ladder of different rates for other transactions. Meanwhile the black market rate, remorselessly tracking the printing practices of the central bank, had reached about 50,000 to the dollar. In February a new currency was introduced as part of an austerity package, but it has left the fundamental distortions in place.

The result is a dual economy in which anyone with dollars is fabulously rich. The Sandinistas are dollar kings because they have a monopoly on exports. But they have to spread their dollars around to lubricate a system that is clotted by worthless cordobas. Big coffee and cotton growers are paid dollar incentives. The party faithful are rewarded with coupons to spend at Managua's dollar stores. Government economists, engineers, and technicians are paid dollar bonuses worth more than their salaries. (Though not enough to stanch a catastrophic brain drain. If you telephone Nicaragua you will notice that very few of the international operators speak English. The linguists have already gone to greener pastures in Florida.)

There is another layer of Nicaraguans who do not necessarily handle dollars, but who service the dollar elite and expect to be paid a fee that reflects the black market rate. Skilled mechanics, for instance, or plumbers can earn a relative fortune. They are among the customers at Managua's French restaurant, La Marseillaise, taking their families out to lunch and blithely spending mountains of cordobas, which they leave on the table in uncounted wads of notes tied with rubber bands. La Marseillaise recently built an extra room to handle the brisk business.

Left behind in the cordoba economy, and increasingly alert to the swindle, are farm hands on the state farms, who earn about a dollar a week, and factory workers, who make perhaps two. A study by the private sector organization, COSEP, using the government's own figures, calculates that their buying power has fallen to the levels of the last century. Daniel Ortega accepts that real wages have fallen but argues that this has been cushioned by a subsidized *canasta basica* of rice, beans, sugar, cooking oil, etc., and by the invisible "social wage." There was once some truth in this, but it is wearing thin today. The *canasta* (basket) is two-thirds empty, and the social wage never got far beyond the drawing board.

Take health care. The Sandinistas have cut the incidence of smallpox and polio with the enthusiastic and well-publicized vaccination campaigns. This is not difficult to do. Wherever a sustained effort was needed they have failed badly. Malaria, dengue, and hepatitis have got worse since 1979. Half the doctors have left the country. Managua's maternity hospital is filthy and understaffed. There is a critical shortage of medicine, and some of what is available (the part that has no international value and cannot be smuggled out for resale in Costa Rica by corrupt officials from the Health Ministry) is labeled in Cyrillic script, to be dispensed with an educated guess. One can make allowances as to why the Sandinista *proyecto* of social justice has withered on the vine, but only a fanatic can still maintain that poor Nicaraguans live better now than during the last years of Somoza.

I believe that if the contras had received American military aid for another two years the country would have become ungovernable.

It is not surprising that the Sandinistas have failed to bring prosperity. Their writings before the revolution show little interest in the dynamics of wealth creation, not even in Communist economic theory. In fact, their grounding in Marxism generally is thin. Harry Berghold, until recently the American ambassador in Managua, reportedly used to enjoy debating the comandantes on their own ideological turf, running rings around them with his superior grip on Marxist doctrine. They are, of course, Leninists. They hold power through a secretive and elite vanguard party, but their inspiration, a nationalist brew of martyrs, myths, symbols, and demagoguery, resembles that Marxist heresy we call fascism. In particular the Italian brand of Mussolini.

To the extent that the Sandinista regime has made anti-Americanism its legitimizing principle and has become a military client of the Soviet Union, it makes scant difference to U.S. security which variety of oppression it chooses. But it matters inside Nicaragua. The structure of the economy is a key to understanding the political vulnerability of the regime. The Sandinistas have not nationalized the means of production, as occurred in Cuba. They manipulate the private sector through a system of licenses and monopolies in what is really an extreme version of Latin American mercantilism. "Patriotic producers" can prosper. The Sandinistas have nothing against profit. On the other hand, enemies of the state, like Enrique Bolanos from COSEP, wake up one morning to find that peasants armed with AK-47 rifles have taken a fancy to their land, and to their tractors and trucks.

This system is familiar enough in the Third World. While not enviable, it can admit a tolerably productive private sector so long as everybody knows the rules of the game. The Sandinistas, however, have been too undisciplined to make it work. They have expropriated landowners who tried to cooperate, turned credit on and off capriciously (all banks are nationalized), and pursued lunatic state pricing policies. The result is decapitalization as owners run down their farms and factories. Exports tell the tale. They fell from $646 million in 1978 to $292 million in 1987. According to Dr. Jaime Bengoechea, president of the Nicaraguan Chamber of Industry, the country used to export about $150 million in manufactured goods to the rest of Central America. Now it exports less than $20 million. Nicaraguan industry is a carcass.

Bankruptcy alone is not life-threatening in a totalitarian system, provided the regime keeps control of what remains of the economy. Indeed, hunger can induce obedience where the government has a food monopoly. The problem for the Sandinistas is that they control less and less. The private sector has become adept at evading oversight, and it has given protective cover to an exploding black market that is by some estimates bigger than the official economy. The effect is profoundly subversive. The Sandinistas can no longer threaten to sack workers in state industries if they get out of line because wages are so abysmal that they are already leaving in droves, hoping to turn a quick buck as *buhoñeros* (hustlers) on the streets. In private industries the government used to maintain influence through its puppet labor union—the Confederation of Sandinista Workers—which issues coupons to the subsidized state stores, known as CATs, where workers can buy shoes and clothes at a fraction of the free market price. In the past, life was unbearable for a worker who did not have access to the CATs, and many told me they defected from the opposition unions to the Sandinista union just to get a CAT card. But now the government's distribution system has so disintegrated that the CATs no longer have much to offer. At the same time wages in the private sector are finding their own level despite pay scales fixed by the state, making the CATs less relevant. (In June the government announced an end to wage and price controls.)

Food ration cards have lost their clout. "I don't bother with them anymore," says Coco Lopez, a Managua cook. "You go to the *dispendio* and there's nothing there." She buys her food at the Eastern Market. The Sandinistas have periodically tried to close this seething labyrinth of free enterprise, and lost at least one of their inspectors to a lynch mob of market women. Lately, the Ministry of Internal Commerce seems to have given up the struggle. The stalls are better stocked than they have been in years, and even prohibited products like rice, intended for the government patronage machine, are being sold under the table. Last year a large delivery of Soviet rice found its way into the Oriental Market before it reached the government rationing posts. Although food ration cards are still important in some rural areas, they are not decisive. Those who attend meetings of the opposition Conservative party, say, in the little town of El Carmen, may fear reprisals from the local office of the political police, but it is increasingly rare to find them worried about losing their *tarjeta*, as the card is called.

The Sandinistas have lost their grip on their primary tool of totalitarian control: economic coercion. Dr. Jose Luis Medal, a Nicaraguan economist who runs a consultancy firm in Managua, estimates that over 60 percent of the workforce in the capital is beyond the government's economic control. Nor have the Sandinistas done much better creating the political apparatus of the one-party state. Unlike the Salvadoran guerrillas, who are real revolutionary Marxists rather than putschists, the Sandinistas did not develop a support network before seizing power. They had to create their mass organizations almost from scratch, without being able to draw on an army of cadres seasoned by years of struggle. Opportunists and turncoat Somocistas filled many of the slots. The result is a party base with the militancy of a suet pudding. There are exceptions. The Sandinista Youth can usually put together a *turba* of street hoodlums and send them out with crowbars to kneecap reactionaries. But beyond inciting spasms of violence, the party has few effective instruments of social control.

The Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS), called the "eyes and ears of the revolution" by Sandinista Godfather Tomas Borge, have caused indignation abroad where they have been compared to the Nazi "Blockwart." In fact they are a joke. In some neighborhoods people don't even know who their block captain is, and they certainly don't care. In others, they point lazily down the

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street, then add that nobody much bothers with the CDS anymore. In the early 1980s Nicaraguans went to committee meetings in the evening because it was a way of getting government hand-outs, like a waterpump for the community. Once the munificence came to an end, so did the attendance.

The CDS still have the informal function of recruiting for the army. They do not do a good job. Nicaragua has a very high rate of draft evasion. Last January a group of youths at a village baseball game in Carazo—an area not known for contra sympathies—told me they were nearly all draft-dodgers. "Well, mate, it's everyone for himself, isn't it?" said one. "Why should I get my *cojones* blown off for the Ortegas?" Defense Minister Humberto Ortega boasts of building a 600,000-man reserve army. Either he is bluffing, or he is going mad.

The Sandinistas tried the Nazi trick of creating party-affiliated replicas to mirror and undermine every institution in Nicaraguan society. It failed. None of the imposters gained credibility. The "popular church," which caused immense confusion abroad, lost a slow battle as the bishops plucked the liberation theologians one by one from their dioceses. Some foreign firebrands have been recalled by their orders in Europe, others have toned down their sermons. The church hierarchy, headed by Cardinal Obando, is accepted by the overwhelming majority of Nicaraguans as the only legitimate version of Catholicism. The regime can no longer pretend to have the blessing of the church. It is common knowledge what Obando thinks of Sandinismo.

The Sandinistas have not succeeded in establishing a totalitarian system in Nicaragua. They still have tools of control, above all the DGSE (political police) which has penetrated the opposition organizations and unions, and strikes pre-emptively. Spontaneous insurrection is therefore unlikely. But the Sandinistas are vulnerable to an insurrection induced by a skilled vanguard party (to use the terminology of Marxist revolutionaries) that erodes the authority of the government and provokes it into blunders.

Humberto Ortega understands this well. He masterminded the Sandinistas' own insurrection a decade ago from his headquarters in Costa Rica. At the time Tomas Borge, seeing no signs of insurrection and disappointed in the mettle of the proletariat, was pushing a Maoist strategy of "prolonged popular war" in the mountains. But Ortega sensed that the foundations of Somocismo had become so rotten that a few well-judged jolts would bring the edifice tumbling down. He launched a series of daring raids against the National Guard in October 1977 which had no military impact, but radically altered the war of perception. They were a catalyst for the Monimbo Indian Uprising four months later, the watershed of the civil war. Ortega admits that he never controlled the urban sans-culottes who manned the barricades and bore the brunt of the fighting.

The structure of the economy is a key to understanding the political vulnerability of the regime.

They were not Sandinistas. But he harnessed them. He calculated correctly that a Leninist core, catching the imagination with a deft use of symbolism, could set off insurrection if all the right conditions came together.

By the beginning of this year, the contras had reached a perception threshold inside Nicaragua. They were on the verge of becoming a revolutionary vanguard. They had transformed themselves from a Somocista raiding force into the biggest peasant insurgency in Latin America. It was an astonishing achievement that had little to do with the strategic foresight of the contra leadership, or of the CIA. It had to do with eight years of Sandinismo. Like most of the press corps in Central America, I was slow to realize what was happening. My education was a solitary ten-day walk in early 1985 through the mountain provinces of Jinotega, Matagalpa, and Boaco. This is an area full of yeoman farmers, or kulaks, some with fifty head of cattle, others with little more than a horse, but united by rugged individualism. I wandered from farm to farm, eating and sleeping wherever I was invited in, and conducting dozens of random interviews.

The first grievance was food confiscation by the Ministry of Internal Commerce. The peasants were forced to sell their produce to the state at fixed prices. But the prices did not keep up with inflation. Indeed, the government became more and more rapacious as the economy went into a tailspin, and there came a time when prices fell below the cost of production. There is some debate as to whether this was a deliberate strategy to stamp out an independent landowning peasantry and force them into collectives and cooperatives where they could be controlled. Jose Luis Medal, who has written a treatise on the economic philosophy of the Sandinistas, believes it was simply a case of inept planning.

The benefit of the doubt cannot be extended, however, to Sandinista military repression. I do not understand how Americas Watch, the New York-based human rights organization, could conclude that Sandinista abuses during that period were not systematic. I met several villagers who told me they had been arrested, usually for periods of two to eight weeks, and had been beaten up, ducked under water (*el submarino*), and threatened. It was clear that the heaviest repression was happening in the pre-trial detention centers, to which the International Red Cross was denied entry, not in the formal judicial system. The 500 or so prisoners who were being convicted each year by the Anti-Somocista Tribunals, where the judges were party activists from the block committees, were just the tip of the iceberg.

Back in Managua I visited the opposition Permanent Human Rights Commission and began to look more thoroughly at their stack of testimonies (which are very limited because they depend on peasants coming all the way to Managua to make a deposition, and most peasants don't know the organization exists). Over the next two years I did a number of spot checks in remote villages where the commission had news of killings, and confirmed my suspicion that some Sandinista militias conduct death-squad operations. So do some contra units. One side is as brutal as the other. The difference is that the Sandinistas, enjoying greater resources, practice a more extensive pre-emptive repression.

The Sandinista methods of subjugating the recalcitrant peasantry were badly calibrated. They were not ruthless enough to crush all resistance—the regime is too dependent on international goodwill to risk Guatemalan-style massacres—but they went far enough to embitter thousands of families, and probably had the net effect of enlarging the support base of the contras. By early 1988 there were chunks of Nicaragua where the contras, known as "Los Primos" (the cousins), could move freely, confident that the villagers would not give away their movements, while Sandinista troops had the uneasy feeling of being an army of occupation. Taking a leaf out of the Sandinista textbook of vanguard mythology, local contra commanders have emerged as popular heroes. Comandante "Franklin" of the Jorge Salazar II regional command has almost legendary stature in his home province of Chontales, where he has outfoxed much larger Sandinista forces for year after year.

The contras face a formidable military machine. Somoza's National Guard never numbered more than 15,000. The Sandinistas have an army of over 70,000 men, backed by a network of militarized cooperatives, and equipped with terrifying Stalin Organs (for concentrated shelling) and MI-24 helicopter gunships.

But the Sandinista People's Army is not all that it is cracked up to be. Discipline is lax. Officers drink on combat missions. The counter-insurgency units, known as BLIs, are made up of recruits with only a few weeks training. They often bunch up together while on patrol, ignoring an elementary safeguard against ambushes. Perhaps the poor showing of the Sandinistas' infantry (with the notable exception of the elite Pablo Ubeva forces) has led them to ignore the lessons of the successful counter-insurgency in Guatemala in 1982, which was conducted with foot soldiers. Instead, the Sandinistas have increasingly copied the American dependence on air support in Vietnam. They have even begun bombing hamlets from Antonov aircraft with 500-pound bombs, a sure sign of military sclerosis.

By contrast, the rebels have gotten better. Honing their skills in the field, they have learned how to concentrate forces for big operations, then melt back into smaller units. Before Christmas they launched the two biggest operations of the war, one of which nearly succeeded in cutting the Rama road that links the Atlantic Coast to the Pacific. The contras were able to spread news of these attacks through their ra-

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dio station, from Costa Rican stations, and by word of mouth.

These publicity coups came at a time when the Sandinistas already faced a political crisis in the cities. Gambling on the Arias Peace Plan, the government had half-lifted the lid on repression, and the toxic fumes had escaped. *La Prensa*, back in circulation without censorship, was openly ridiculing the regime to undermine its authority. It published an amazing interview with a senior army defector, Major Roger Miranda, who accused President Daniel Ortega of betraying his fellow guerrillas before the revolution. The opposition umbrella group, La Coordinadora Democratica, organized a march on January 10 in which demonstrators openly chanted, "viva la resistencia."

Then came the near total breakdown of Managua in late January when Soviet supplies were delayed. My neighborhood had no water for five days, except for nocturnal trickles. In poor barrios, where residents share taps, the women were getting up at one in the morning to line up for water with buckets. Gas was almost unavailable, except by bribery. Drivers waited in long coiling lines outside gas stations in the hope of buying five gallons. Nobody moved for hours on end because power cuts had put the pumps out of action. Random blackouts shut down factories. Air-conditioned offices without ventilation became furnaces. Tempers were frazzled. In the markets and on buses people openly cursed the government. The city was a tinderbox, yet the Sandinistas had no reliable way of stifling unrest other than raw force.

The day was nearing when they would either have to risk losing control or use police repression in the streets of Managua, which could be televised and seen all over the world. The U.S. Congress spared them that dilemma.

On February 3, Congress voted down new aid for the contras. The momentum of months sputtered out within days. Once they saw that the United States had abandoned the contras, many Nicaraguans concluded that Sandinismo would be their future after all. They came down off the fence where they had been sitting, waiting, wondering whether to risk throwing in their lot with the opposition.

Many Americans find this impossible to understand. They have swallowed the cliché that Nicaraguans are anti-American nationalists. In fact the reverse is true. Nicaraguans on the whole are exceedingly pro-American, or *gringuista* as they say, and many see El Norte as the promised land. They also have a naive faith in American power: they tend to assume that if the United States intervenes its client will ultimately win, and Nicaraguans like being on the winning side. While liberal commentators in Washington write claptrap about how the contras can never succeed as long as they are identified with the United States, the contras themselves see their interests differently: for six years they have been busy inside Nicaragua trying to reassure people that Reagan stands with them. The perception that he does not is fatal.

The Congress was put in a delicate situation by the Arias Peace Plan. It would have made for unpopular diplomacy if the United States had renewed military aid to the contras two weeks after the Central American presidents had signed a joint peace accord in San Jose. Why they signed it is no mystery. Oscar Arias overrated his own powers of persuasion. The more cynical presidents of Honduras and El Salvador got caught in the public relations trap of peace summitry. All had doubts whether a divided Washington would ever give the contras the wherewithal to win. Arias in particular concluded that accommodation with the Sandinistas would be a more stable option than an interminable war on the border. The accord gave doubting Democrats all the cover they needed to back away from the policy. Perhaps a few even believed that the Sandinistas would fulfill their promises to "democratize."

If so, their credulity is unpardonable. As Sen. Ernest Hollings aptly put it: "There's no education in the second kick of a mule." In 1979 the Ortegas led a faction known as the "Tercerist-as" that formed a tactical alliance with business leaders and centrist parties. It involved a Machiavellian campaign of distortion to present the Sandinista Front as a disparate movement with a few Communists on the fringe, but mostly made up of nationalists and social democrats. After seizing power the Ortegas continued to make all the right noises, even as a secret party document, the September 1979 "analy-

KRIS KRISTOFFERSON IN SAPOA

by Sheldon Kelly

You are entering Sapoa, Nicaragua. Dust devils whip across the rutted road; ragged, listless campesinos stare from unpainted shacks, spotted incongruously with new FSLN government posters. Several sway-backed horses stand in the shade of a fly-ridden *tienda*. On one of them is a barefoot old man in a straw hat, slumped motionless. Then you see the church, as sparkling white as bridal cloth. Looking closer, you see the paint is fresh, and covers the boarded-up entrance; the drippings form a nebula on the bare earth; more is dabbed thinly onto a pile of rocks near a scraggly tree. The tree is the church's focal point and is encased in the brightly colored Sandinista posters. You are now minutes from the customs complex where leaders of the country's Marxist and Resistance armies will discuss peace for the first time ever—and where Kris Kristofferson, the movie star, awaits the momentous opening of the Sandinista-Contra Peace Talks.

Hours before the first words of peace were ventured publicly by Sandinista or contra, Kristofferson had been ushered into the tin-roofed pavillion reserved ostensibly for the working press. He sat on top of a long wooden table like a wrinkled, 100-percent-cotton centerpiece, a California statement. His presence startled me. I had just crossed the plains of Costa Rica's hot, desolate northern Guanacaste, was interrogated humorlessly at a Sandinista checkpoint, then escorted through Sapoa. How did *he* get here, so sweatless and comfortable?

A reporter looked up angrily from his Tandy 200 when I asked him. The movie star had arrived from Managua in an air-conditioned Mercedes-Benz bus, he said. Why? I asked. He didn't know, didn't care. "He came with these . . . these others." He jerked his thumb over his shoulder, lit a cigarette, then returned to his empty screen.

The star's entourage included a light-stepping Cape Cod group calling itself Veterans for Peace, at least one Harvard professor, many young women apparently preoccupied with looking round the dry, empty terrain, then putting notes in prettily covered little journals, and another California notable, Brian Willson. Willson, you may remember, had sacrificed his legs to an on-coming munitions train in Concord, California last summer.

The group mingled, held forth in the fashion of indignant victors of a game known only to themselves. Meanwhile, Kristofferson remained perched on the table-top a few feet away from the speaker's dais and mounted TV cameras. His long, trademark hair and funny, narrow little eyes could be seen from almost anywhere in the cordoned-off area. Around him scores of journalists, thrust into the maw of Hollywood by Sandinista planners, sat, stood, walked, or segued, as it were, from the touring North Americans.

A TASS reporter, a Cuban TV crew, and a host of sullen-faced men and women in Sandinista uniforms with press badges drifted through Kristofferson's court. An American with permed hair, fashionably dressed in khaki pants with many pockets, knit shirt and boat shoes, leaned close to the star's ear, talking in low tones as his eyes darted around the assemblage. The star smiled and smiled, seemingly following the directional beam of the frizzy man's eyes.

"I shouldn't say this because I'm a black and these folks probably support black causes," Pete, a young network cameraman, said. "But Kristofferson and this whole damned bunch being here makes me want to vomit." Pete's statement was a bellwether. Hank, a beefy middle-aged cameraman for another network, stood up from his nearby seat. "This crap is spooky," he said. "It's like deja vu. These were the people wearing Ho Chi Minh buttons when I came home from Vietnam."

A network reporter and producer joined our small, voluble group. "Are you going to get a statement from Kristofferson?" I asked, looking at the star a scant few feet away. The reporter turned to cast a glance, then answered loudly: "F--- him!" The producer wrapped his hands around his chin and stared as if studying a carry-out menu. "Frankly, I'd like to ask him something," he said. "F--- him!" the reporter repeated. "No f------ way will I do it!" The actor looked back at me with seeming ingenuousness, his locks lifting like a gray veil in the wind.

"This may be our finest hour," Hank said. He looked away. A braless, barefoot young woman wearing a slogan-imprinted T-shirt had begun jogging in place on the hot sidewalk outside. Nearby, Willson, standing on prosthesis, was gesticulating to a small rapt audience. "This better be a f------ movie," Hank said. "I'm losing it."

By early afternoon, shortly before General Humberto Ortega mounted the dais to announce the contra-crushing cease-fire, Kristofferson and the rest were escorted away by Sandinista personnel. Their reasons for being there seemed concluded, as all sideshows eventually are. □

Sheldon Kelly is a staff writer for Reader's Digest.

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sis of the situation and tasks," outlined puppet pluralism to neutralize international opinion. "Humberto [Ortega] is brilliant," says Arturo Cruz, Jr., a former Sandinista who now advises the contras. "He's resurrecting the whole Tercerista project of tactical compromise."

In any case, the Arias Plan and the subsequent Sapoa agreement never made a settlement contingent on a separation of the army and the party. It must be remembered that the Sandinista Front began as a military organization, and only turned itself into a political party after the revolution. Militarism is the essence of Sandinismo. "Their best cadres are in the army," says Virgilio Godoy, former minister of labor and now head of the Independent Liberal party. In El Salvador the FMLN have flatly rejected any peace that leaves the structure of the Salvadoran state intact. They have demanded power sharing and a fusion of the opposed military forces.

The contras have been negotiating terms that amount to a graceful surrender. At times even the grace is missing. "What we are discussing is how the mercenary forces, who are already defeated, can lay down their weapons," said Daniel Ortega recently. "They should be grateful that we are not offering them the guillotine or the firing squad." As I write this piece the talks have stalled. The contras have begun to define their concept of acceptable democratization, but so late in the day as to give the impression that they are merely obstructing. They are threatening to return to war. That will be difficult. Nicaraguans have seen Adolfo Calero and Humberto Ortega standing side by side on television singing the national anthem. This gives legitimacy to the contras but at the same time it smacks of *personalismo.* Nicaraguan history is full of unlikely alliances, of deals cut across ideological lines, of cooption. The perception of betrayal undoubtedly saps the militancy of the contra base. There has already been a mutiny by some field commanders.

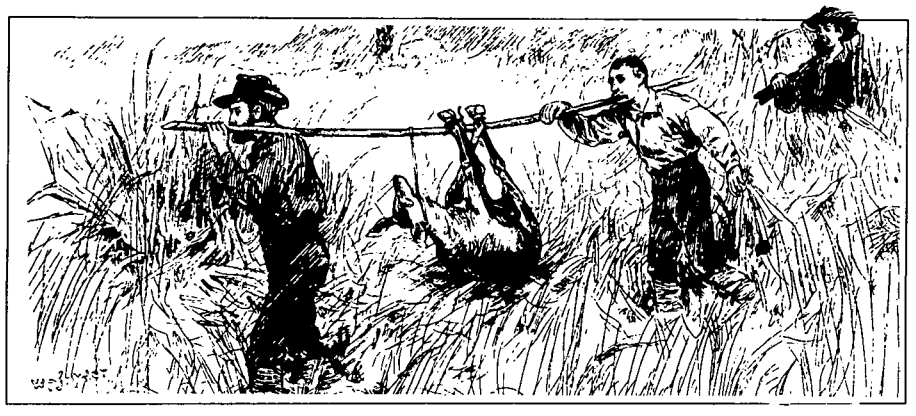
If the war is lost, it was lost in Washington. Those who believe that the United States defeated the Tet Offensive in 1968, but didn't realize it and lost the will to fight, may see a parallel in Nicaragua. In the field the contras did better than almost anybody, including the Sandinistas, ever expected. With hindsight they could have done even better. Too many contra leaders saw their force as the spearhead for direct U.S. intervention. As a result they retained the structure of a conventional army, fighting in large units with long supply routes. In the end it was the semi-autonomous field commanders, many of whom were renegade Sandinistas, who took the initiative and adapted to the imperatives of guerrilla warfare. There was never enough emphasis on political organization, particularly creating an urban front for insurrection. The leaders were always jockeying for advantage against each other in a game of what Nicaraguans call "politica electorera," instead of planning hellfire and revolution. "We're one-third turtles, one-third rabbits, and one-third hogs," said a contra official candidly in a moment of despair.

Only a fanatic can still maintain that poor Nicaraguans live better now than during the last years of Somoza.

Even so, the motley coalition has held together, and advanced. The problem has been selling their success in the U.S. I discount the polls that indicate a majority opposes the Administration's Nicaragua policy. They are soft numbers reflecting an instinctive isolationism. More serious is the opinion among the American clerisy that the contras can't fight. It's said they do not hold territory. But no guerrilla insurgency in Latin America holds territory in the strict sense. There's not a square foot of El Salvador that the army cannot occupy, yet the rebel FMLN is causing havoc nevertheless. Textbook doctrine holds that so long as guerrillas are not losing, they are ultimately winning. Congress, eager for instant results, has turned this on its head. Because the contras are not seizing towns and developing a visible system of dual power, they are said to be losing. The contras themselves are partly to blame, for setting unreasonable expectations and failing to define a strategy of prolonged popular war.

They have also suffered unfair criticism in the U.S. for their dependence on outside support. It is a myth that other insurgencies in Central America are self-sufficient. The Sandinistas themselves had sanctuary in Costa Rica, and got arms from Venezuela, Panama, and of course Cuba. In El Salvador the rebels are relatively self-sufficient, but even they need Nicaraguan supplies. In 1983 they went into a nose dive when the Sandinistas temporarily suspended supply flights across the Gulf of Fonseca, after the U.S. invasion of Grenada sent a shock wave through Managua. Moreover, the contras are necessarily more dependent on hard supplies than the FMLN because they have been fighting a regime that extends social control more deeply than most. I have watched Salvadoran guerrillas on shopping trips buying sacks of beans and sugar in village stores. Until recently this would have been impossible in Nicaragua because the government kept a tight rein on the distribution system. Incidentally, the Salvadorans pay for their groceries with money extorted from farmers, passengers on buses, or hostage families. Imagine the uproar if the contras tried that. They have to try to conduct a guerrilla war that satisfies the sensibilities of a refined democracy, which is impossible.

Could the Reagan Administration have crafted the policy more skillfully? It quickly fell prey to partisan politics. "The contras became the favorite godchild of the far right in this country, and that was the kiss of death," says a State Department official who enthusiastically supports the resistance. Could anything have been done to bring the Democrats on board? Perhaps. Some officials now concede that they moved too quickly, though delay also entailed risks. The original nucleus of the contras might have dispersed, leaving the Administration with little to work with. The Sandinistas would have had longer to build an army and indoctrinate Nicaragua's youth. "The apparatus of control would have made it much harder to get an uprising going," said one of the architects of the policy. "But politically it would have made more sense to have waited. It would have been much easier to sell the idea in Washington if there'd already been rioting in the streets, like Haiti or the Philippines. And they would have rioted."



By using the military option immediately the Administration gave the Sandinistas a pretext for totalitarian mischief, and undercut its own attempts to portray the regime as illegitimate. Worse, the dependence on officers from Somoza's National Guard was a gift to the Sandinista office of Agitation and Propaganda (DAP). The CIA compounded this with its stubborn preference for men without revolutionary vision, Adolfo Calero in particular. Oliver North continued the CIA approach during the Boland affair, using "el private supply network" (as the contras call it) to channel money to the dependable troglodytes, cutting out the ex-Sandinistas who brought appeal, flair, and revolutionary praxis to the movement. Arturo Cruz, Jr., who wrote a biting critique of the contra strategy that enraged Oliver North and led to a rift between them, says that "the boys really blew it; they used Calero as their foreman in Nicaragua but they didn't understand that his face was so big it hid the faces of the young peasants in the field."

The post-mortems span the spectrum. Some still insist that the Sandinistas could have been co-opted, forgetting that Jimmy Carter tried it. The Sandinistas received $118 million in U.S. aid after July 1979 (more than Somoza got in a quarter century), their debt was rescheduled on the softest of terms, and the rules of the Inter-American Development Bank were bent to allow them loans. Yet they gobbled up Nicaragua without flinching. The revolution was not for sale, said Tomas Borge. Perhaps it could have been ignored. A plausible case can be made that the collapse of Central America would not have significantly affected the U.S., provided Washington kept out of it altogether. Mexico has its own separate rhythm, and a gaggle of bankrupt Albanias on the isthmus would threaten nobody but their own people.

Instead, the U.S. chose the worst option. It intervened, but not decisively. It made a commitment without following through. It suffered opprobrium in the world forum for the exercise of imperial power, without putting that power to much effect. At the end of the day, the region is more or less back to square one, and attention is shifting again to the misfortunes of El Salvador, where the political center is collapsing. Gov. Dukakis says it's "the worst fiasco of my lifetime." I believe he truly doesn't understand how close the contras came to paralyzing Nicaragua. Those Democrats who do have an inkling can't easily admit it. To do so would be to admit that in cutting contra aid their party snatched an American defeat from the jaws of victory. □

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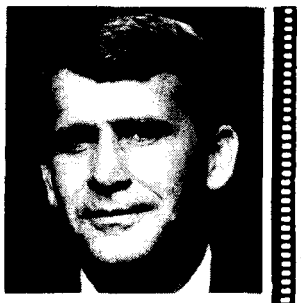

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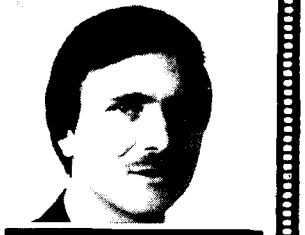

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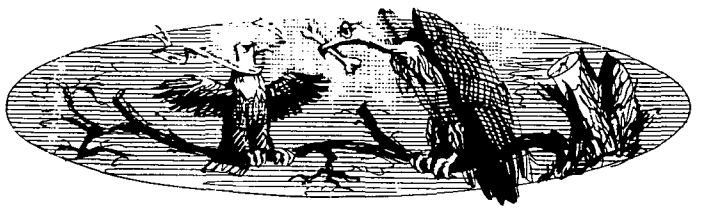

THE OTHER DUKE

by Gregory A. Fossedal

Palo Alto, California

They say this state is a trend-setter, and with its relatively issueless campaigns of 1986 and early 1988, California once again seems to be setting the tone. For with the Reagan prosperity now in its sixth year, and the leaders of both parties agreed on the merits of another U.S.-Soviet détente—"negotiating from strength again," as the *National Interest* puts it—there isn't exactly a burning national dispute about anything. Just remember, that debate started right here.

At the front of this unrevolutionary revolution, symbolizing the laid-back non-contentiousness of California's *politique sans souci*, is Republican Governor George Deukmejian. Quiet, unassuming, and satisfied to remain such, Deukmejian calls to mind Warren Harding's passionate pleas for non-passion, a return to post-Reagan-Revolutionary normalcy. He is, as one GOP activist told me, "something of a Clark Kent without the pizzazz." All he has done is to help the people he governs, a state roughly the economic size of Britain or Japan, to restore near-full employment, with pretty decent government services, low inflation, a sober respect for environmental quality, and a balanced budget—all, moreover, without taking credit for working any sort of "California Miracle." If it takes equanimity and social tranquility to achieve these things, Deukmejian seems to say, Gary Cooper-like, well then, far be it from me to disturb the peace.

Indeed, if Ronald Reagan irritates other politicians by doing impossible things with so little effort, George Deukmejian ought positively to infuriate them.

Politicians of both parties worship at the shrine of a balanced budget, and Deukmejian is the consummate balancer. Handed a $1.5 billion deficit by the outgoing Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown, Deukmejian, unlike Reagan, turned it into a surplus—in one year. Unlike Michael Dukakis and many governors, he's never signed a major tax hike, though California's Duke did propose one this year. (He then compounded the error by blaming the press for creating a "perception" that it was a tax hike, when in fact even most Republicans were calling it the same.) Unlike Illinois Republican Jim Thompson, he did all this without a lot of anti-Reagan posturing, and without driving his state's economy into the doldrums.

And, unlike a former GOP governor oft-mentioned on the short list for George Bush's running mate, Tennessee's Lamar Alexander, Deukmejian has done something to rebuild his party. Republicans are stronger in both the state legislature and the state's national congressional delegation. The Duke's well-run 1982 race, focused in large part against the kookiness of then-Senate candidate Jerry Brown, probably helped tip the ballot boxes for now-Senator Pete Wilson as well. California was one of the few sources of GOP joy in the fall of the Volcker-Reagan depression. In 1986, the Duke turned his own campaign and that of many Republicans largely into a referendum against the leftist chief justice of California's supreme court, Rose Bird. (Californians can vote to throw justices off the court after a fixed term.) Bird was crushed, and Deukmejian was easily re-elected, along with several promising first-time legislators. In the national House, meanwhile, Californians lay claim to several leading young turk Reaganites, including Jerry Lewis, Duncan Hunter, David Dreier, and the irrepressible Robert Dornan. Dreier says Deukmejian "was a major help to all of us, both directly in terms of campaign assistance, and indirectly in terms of his own campaigns helping shift votes to the Republican party."

Thus in terms both partisan and non, Deukmejian has established himself as one of the top five or ten politicians in his party. Ask any Reaganite to cite the governor's main accomplishments and the answer isn't long in coming. "Look," says Martin Anderson, a Hoover Institution scholar and Deukmejian intimate, "he balanced the budget. And he didn't raise taxes. That's a lot. And meanwhile he spent a lot on education. That's more. And you pick up a newspaper and he's rated at better than 80 percent popularity in some polls. Four out of five people think he's doing a good job. That's an awful lot." The four-out-of-five figure is accurate but a little misleading. Four out of five people think "Governor Deukmejian" is performing well, but fewer than four in five can identify who "George Deukmejian" is. Still, in the age of politics with little politics, this is almost a perfect ten; many people who don't even know who Deukmejian is like him.

In addition, Deukmejian has been tough on crime. In fact, he rode the death penalty to several victories throughout his career, from a state legislature race in the 1960s that he almost lost to his 1986 landslide over Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley. In helping get Rose Bird kicked off the court in 1986, Deukmejian did something Reagan failed to do in 1987 with Justice Robert Bork: rallied popular support for an active jurisprudence of original intent. Reagan griped about the "politicization" of judicial appointments; Deukmejian capitalized on it. Thus, the California governor has the crime issue in his bones. It's an issue the Republicans might well want to use against the Massachusetts governor, whose dangerous and silly prison furlough programs have come under attack even from Democrats.

By common wisdom, then, George Deukmejian is a rather dull fellow but a terrifically adept politician. My own sense is that both halves of this formulation are a bit wrong.

It's easy to see why some reporters find Deukmejian drab: They've read his speeches. Hearing the Duke deliver them, though, is somewhat more inspiring. His oratorical style is steady but snappy. Republicans and Democrats who saw him debate New York's Mario Cuomo in Washington on the issue of Reaganomics rated the match a rough draw—that's quite an achievement considering Cuomo's

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reputation as a rouser of emotions.

One of the governor's most impassioned speeches was a 1985 attack on Ronald Reagan—for downplaying the holocaust of Armenians from whom Deukmejian descends. "Deukmejian's positions," wrote David Willman in the *San Jose Mercury*, "were revealing for their content and the emotion with which he delivered them." Indeed. The Duke also spoke forcefully on behalf of some economic sanctions, such as university divestiture, against South Africa. While this wouldn't please Howard Phillips, the point is that Deukmejian does have fire, and tyrannical governments seem to ignite it. The governor's few references to foreign policy speak consistently of "promoting . . . freedom and democracy abroad," not merely "defending" America or "containing" Communism. His catholicity in including South African blacks in this vision may irritate some, but makes clear that Deukmejian has in mind not a mere tactical doctrine here and there, but what he calls a "principled advocacy" of democratic republicanism.

If his charisma is underrated, though, the Duke's achievements as governor are probably overrated. Take education. California has certainly spent more money on this under Deukmejian. In 1986, it was still possible to praise California for producing student performances on a par with those of New York state, yet with vastly less money spent per pupil, citing 1984 and 1985 statistics. That's becoming increasingly hard to do as California's education budget skyrockets: from $11.1 billion in 1982-83 to $19.2 billion proposed for 1988-89. California, in the middle of the spending pack in 1982, now shovels more money at schools than all but a handful of other states. To equate more money with an improvement in quality would be, as Deukmejian has said, a mistake. "In California and in other states," he told an audience at the Heritage Foundation, "there are some truly outstanding, high performance schools. Many of these schools are getting the same amount of money, and sometimes less money, per student. . . . Yet their students are getting better grades."

Thus Deukmejian rightly has focused on education reform as the key to success. "He doesn't want to be accused of augmenting merely the quality of teachers' lives, and not the quality of education," wrote Lawrence Minard in *Forbes*. His model of reform, though, has involved tinkering within the administrator-teacher complex, closely following Reagan's misguided national effort. First, Deukmejian appointed an elitist Commission on Educational Quality to evaluate what makes schools successful. These education bureaucrats came up with the usual laundry list of reforms: higher pay for teachers, adding a few days to the school year and encouraging summer schools, and firing the occasional outrageously incompetent teacher. The impact of changes wrought by this brigade of Ph.D.'s has been marginal at best, and sometimes positively destructive. While local districts aren't required to distribute AIDS education packets that legitimize homosexuality, for example, administrators have used the state packet as a means of forcing their own sex education agenda on district after district. Activists here in Silicon Valley have pleaded with local schools for the last eighteen months to drop such materials as a pamphlet on "anal intercourse" and "water sports" from school curricula reaching kids as young as 14 years of age. No dice; the local officials always cite the program as one "even George Deukmejian hasn't opposed," and the New Righters go home empty-handed. The net effect, then, of more spending, and even of the reform-by-the-experts effort, has been to decrease the authority parents have over the education of their own children.

Giving parents more choice through a voucher or credit, by contrast, is the one reform that such experts as Denis Doyle agree would make schools substantially more effective. It would also circumvent the vice-grip that state education czar Bill Honig has applied to discourage such experimentation. Even the *New Republic* now favors at least giving vouchers a fair test in a large state or district, an idea also endorsed by the nation's governors. Unfortunately, the Duke hasn't seen the issue in terms of choice, and California's schools slog along with more money, ignoring ever more brazenly what the customers want. A longtime adviser to Deukmejian says that "if someone else put together a good voucher bill in the legislature, Deukmejian would see the benefits of it and go with it pretty quickly. But he's not going to do it himself. He picks up good ideas from other people but he's not himself an initiator."

A similar dynamic emerges on the budget and tax issues for which Deukmejian is most famed. "California Slashes Big Government," gushed James Bovard in the *Reader's Digest* several years ago. Well, not exactly. California spending has risen in real terms under Deukmejian, to $44 billion for 1988-89 from a total budget of $25 billion in 1982-83. Taxes per capita have nearly kept pace with Mario Cuomo's New York, remaining well above the national average despite the constraints of Proposition 13 and related ballot measures. California, like Massachusetts, also benefited from the boom in

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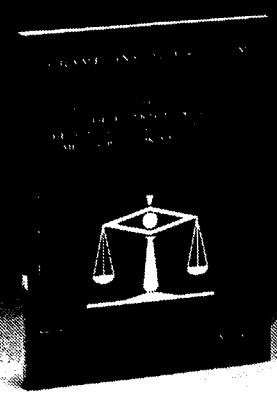

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defense contracting: About 20 percent of the 1984 Pentagon budget came here. Deukmejian, unlike Reagan, did block hundreds of spending plans amounting to a hefty percentage of the state's annual budgets. But then, Deukmejian, unlike Reagan, has made use of an item-veto blue pencil to remove particular items.

All this is mentioned by way of adding perspective to some nevertheless Herculean achievements. And it also omits Deukmejian's finest hour: his dogged 1983 stand against any tax hike in the midst of a tidal wave of respectable opinion flowing the opposite way.

Days after Deukmejian was elected on a no-tax-hike pledge, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote an editorial it thought would serve as an obituary of this idea. With Mondalesque certainty, the editorial proclaimed that everyone knew there had to be a tax increase. Even Ronald Reagan, after all, had signed on to the largest tax hike in history a few months before. So the *Times* set about tutoring the new governor in reality. In the weeks to come, both Republicans and Democrats took turns pleading with, giving instructions to, and pounding on the new governor to do what reason demanded. "Everyone," wrote Minard in *Forbes*, "thought Deukmejian had one option. . . . But everyone was wrong."

Everyone in particular had underestimated the popular force of the tax revolt, which won its greatest publicity triumphs with the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978 and the election of Reagan in 1980, but has since been upheld and even extended in a number of follow-up elections and ballot initiatives. Everyone, however, didn't include Deukmejian. "I think the combination of Prop 13 and Reagan had a profound effect on him," says a former top aide to the Duke. "He saw Reagan as moving from an eloquent but somewhat limited politician in the 1970s, a sort of suave Barry Goldwater, to a political giant surfing on a great wave. The big difference between the old Reagan and the new Reagan was the tax cuts, all the supply-side stuff. And Reagan himself, in turn, was clearly intrigued by the success of the tax cuts on the ballots. In retrospect, it's surprising that so many politicians missed it." Another politician who didn't miss the lesson, by the way, was Jerry Brown, who rapidly reversed his opposition to Proposition 13 and even tried to take credit for the economies in government that resulted.

Indeed, the pervasive use of direct democracy and popular referendum has greatly influenced the kind of political leader produced by the state. In both parties, a certain breed now predominates: the somewhat passive, reserved, and soft-spoken man who seldom launches vast schemes, but does have a sensitive feel for which schemes launched by others will play with the electorate. Examples run the gamut from Tom Bradley to Pete Wilson, Ed Zschau, and even Brown and Alan Cranston. (Cranston's 1984 fixation on the nuclear freeze stemmed from its success on state ballots in 1982.) Whether the issue is crime, the budget, education, or the environment, it's hard to think of a major policy in California in which the people haven't led their elected representatives. Deukmejian—like Reagan in launching the Star Wars program or the Reagan Doctrine—has one of the most sensitive antennae in politics. And therein lies the secret of his success in a state where voter initiative places a premium on this skill.

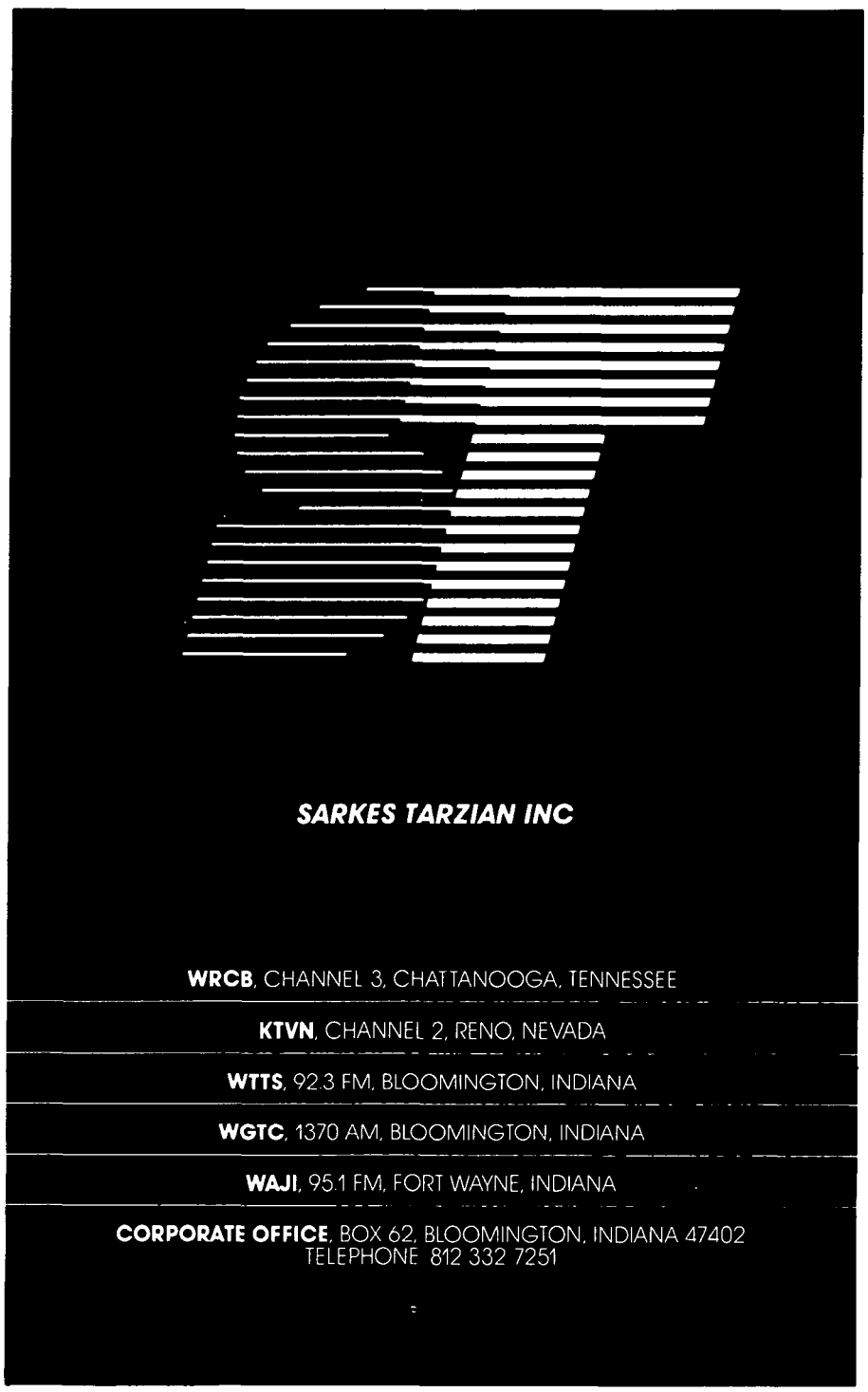
His success, and the sheer size and strategic import of his state, naturally has prompted speculation on a Bush-Deukmejian ticket. You can safely bet against it. Deukmejian, for one, truly doesn't want to run. And while all politicians affect a certain uninterest in the number-two slot, the Duke really means it. The best proof was the governor's appearance on the June 12 David Brinkley show. Pressed by George Will, a journalist, as to whether he would really turn down party and country to remain in California, Deukmejian answered as only someone strongly desirous of not being a running mate would. "My astrologer," he said, "told me today was a bad day to answer that question," a snide jibe at you-know-what administration.

Given a strong push, of course, Deukmejian would reconsider. Anderson insists: "No way he's going to say no. I don't believe it." But aides close to both Deukmejian and Bush, long the governor's favorite man for 1988, say that in any case the Duke's message has gotten through. In several private meetings, Deukmejian and staffers told Bush that putting the Duke on the ticket was not the key to California anyway, much less the country. "Whether George Bush wins California or the nation is going to be a function of what he says, what agenda he maps out," says Steve Merksamer, the Duke's former chief of staff. "The second spot on the ticket will be important mainly in terms of how it affects that equation." Merksamer, who has attended several vice presidential sessions with Deukmejian, says flatly: "He's not going to be asked."

Getting a touch of California on the ticket, however, might best be achieved with someone else. An April Field poll showed both Robert Dole and Jack Kemp adding as much support to a Bush-led ticket as Deukmejian, even among Californians. And both would add something to the "chemistry of the thing," as Anderson notes. Adding Kemp, Bush would reach out to the populist, activist wing of the Republican party. Dole would bring fewer issues and less *élan*, but a certain *gravitas*. Maybe too much: You can argue that high-powered dream tickets, such as the proposed 1980 Reagan-Ford match-up, may look good on the evening news but bad in the final returns. Reagan-Ford would have seemed an apology for Reagan–anyone else, and eventually undermined the Gipper, even as a Dukakis-Nunn ticket in 1988 might be damaging to the New England spendthrift.

Whom does Deukmejian recommend? That's been discussed in private, aides say, but the governor declined an invitation to comment on these and other matters for *The American Spectator*. "Kemp would help in California," Merksamer argues, "partly because he's from California, playing with the Chargers and growing up here, and partly because he's sort of a Californian in his approach to politics, even in his appearance." And the Senate majority leader? "I don't think Dole would mean much one way or the other here. But obviously he gives help elsewhere."

Bush can't benefit from a national referendum system as his friend the Duke has in California. But there are other ways of channeling ideas onto the agenda and into your campaign—the vice presidential spot included. It would be ironic indeed if George Bush underestimated the potential importance of the running mate and signed up some mediocre politician from Tennessee or Colorado, a tax-hiking Illinois governor, or a gender-gap token from the U.N. or Supreme Court. If he listens to Deukmejian, he won't. □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DOWNEY'S SYNDROME

by Richard Marin

An antichrist of the airwaves is upon us! A broadcast Beelzebub, a syndicated Satan! His name: Morton Downey, Jr. And, yes, he is a conservative.

But first the headlines: DOWNEY A DOWNER—the *New York Post*. DOWNEY AN UGLY DOWNER—the *New York Daily News*. THE PIT BULL OF TALK SHOW HOSTS—*Time*. Etc., etc., all the way to this choice formulation from *Screw* magazine: MORTON DOWNEY: MORON OR PERVERT? As *Newsday*'s TV columnist Marvin Kitman observed: "'The Morton Downey Jr. Show' . . . I gather from the press, is the worst thing to happen to civilized society since the Visigoths sacked Europe."

It isn't, of course. Kitman is just one of the very few among his colleagues to realize it. His fellow critics, almost to a man (and woman), have taken the hard millenarian line, dancing hysterical fits of conniption to the advancing jungle beat of the devil Downey.

For those still in the dark regarding this latest threat to the Republic, all that's happened is there's a man on television—call him Attila the Host—spouting a particularly loud-mouthed, bilious political screed and lots of people seem to be enjoying it. "Confro-talk," as one pundit penned it, is the product for sale on the "Downey" show: high-decibel and no-holds-barred. It's "Crossfire" with live ammo, Phil Donahue on a murderous crack binge.

In one renowned instance, an Aryan Nations leader made the mistake of accusing Downey of "prostituting" himself. Downey's automatic retort: "Hey buddy, don't call me a prostitute *you fat, ugly slob*!" Then came the famous Downey trump card: "GET THAT FAT SLOB OUT OF THE BUILDING. WE DON'T WANT ANY NAZIS HERE!" He kicked him off, just like that, while the crowd—a rambunctious, hair-trigger mob—chanted, *Out! Out! Out!*

Happens all the time, not only to evil fascists but often to the many liberal "Pablum-pukers" invited on the show. Homosexual activist Andrew Humm alleged that Downey—a fierce opponent of "perverted love"—slapped him in the heat of debate. But a New Jersey court dismissed the case. Deafening, vein-popping stand-offs, the occasional ejection—it's all part of the spectacle, entertainment its 55-year-old host is happy to call "verbal rollerball." Or, as a columnist in *Ad Age* succinctly translated it: "a TV winner."

"The Morton Downey Jr. Show" was born in October 1987 at a Secaucus, New Jersey "superstation," WWOR, which broadcasts over the air to greater New York City and via satellite to 2,488 cable systems around the country. As of May 30, the gaping "Downey" maw (the show's insignia and its ethos) went into syndication, delivering to thirty television markets, including nine of the ten largest. The local New York press corps spread the initial shock waves. National syndication will no doubt set off more ripples of disgust in the heartland. Again, it won't be the viewers who get mad (though they might lose interest), just the critics, whose blandly conventional sensibilities wilt in the face of television that so flagrantly breaches the bounds of politesse. Especially when it whips the masses into a lather of populist conservatism.

The *New York Daily News*'s critic-for-life Kay Gardella weighed in first last November: "The motormouth host of the weekday . . . talk show is a purveyor of poor taste, bad manners, and cheap talk. The man is a disgrace to television. . . . Why anybody would allow himself to be a target and whipping boy for such an offensive, unpleasant, abrasive, opportunistic person boggles the mind." A week later David Bianculli of the *New York Post* echoed Gardella's high dudgeon. He assailed the show as "raw, caustic and mindless," an appropriately Hobbesian triple. (Downey's theater of rage is a video-age approximate of the State of Nature.) Bianculli's rating snub: "(½) star."

Unfortunately for the Gardella-Bianculli brigade, words like "poor taste" and "mindless" tend to backfire when applied to commercial television. Sulfurous reviews are the best advertisements a performer of Downey's ilk could hope for: irresistible bait bundled in tabloid fishwrap. His show averages a solid 5.0 Nielsen rating (about 800,000 viewers) in NYC. Nationally, the show has hit high numbers in Chicago, Boston, Miami, Philadelphia, and—surprise—San Francisco. Such insolent viewer misbehavior irks to no end the guardians of "quality" TV.

In *Vanity Fair*, James Wolcott squirted venom from his poison pen all over Downey and his tribe of admirers, "no-neck Bubbas who seem to have been shipped into the studio in cages and crates." He sneered at Downey's "conservative reaction," his "high-energy, low-I.Q. circus in which boneless wimps and liberals are fed into the big maw." Actually, closer examination reveals many a "Bubba" to be a slumming Wall Street suit or Rutgers mini-conservative. Pulitzer Prize-winner Ron Powers, in his TV column for *GQ* magazine, let out an equally apocalyptic wail following his exposure to Downey & Co. After watching the studio audience file out of the WWOR building, Powers writes: "I saw satiation; I saw the afterglow of adrenaline rush. I saw the face of television in the twenty-first century."

Eek. And I thought television in the twenty-first century was going to be nothing but professional wrestling and reruns of "Alf." Surely, at the very least, Downey is relief from the stale, stifling boredom of TV as we know it. Which is the greater offense to taste and propriety: to kick a neo-Nazi off your TV show, or to engage him in meaningful dialogue? Even Donahue, whose bloodletting Gestalt Downey carries to its logical extreme, has welcomed this shot in the arm. "I honestly believe that television's problem is not controversy, but blandness," Phil confided to the *Washington Post*'s Tom Shales (one of the pro-"Downey" few). "So if someone from Secaucus, New Jersey, has a television program in which they're either throwing pies or storming out of the studio, or in the minds of some viewers producing a circus, it may sit easier for other programs

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Richard Marin is television critic for the Washington Times.

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The "Troubles" in Israel

Should Israel withdraw from the "West Bank" and Gaza?

For more than six months now, the "troubles" in Israel have been daily front page features and daily fare on the evening television news. Many thoughtful people may have come to the conclusion that peace could come to this troubled part of the world if the Israelis were to withdraw from Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and from Gaza and if they turned these areas over to the Arabs.

What are the facts?

■ It is a fundamental error to believe that the "occupied territories" are at the root of the problem in Palestine. When the British resigned the Palestine mandate in 1948, the United Nations offered a partition plan to the Jews and Arabs living in the area. The Arabs rejected that partition plan out of hand. The Jews accepted partition into a gerrymandered crazy-quilt and even accepted the internationalization of Jerusalem. This diminished and indefensible territory was to be the dreamed-of Jewish homeland and the haven for the pitiful remnants of Nazi Holocaust survivors.

■ But the Arabs would not allow this to happen. It called for "jihad" — holy war. Five Arab armies attacked the Jewish state at the very moment of its birth. They were defeated, but they managed to occupy and to stay in control of the "West Bank", of Gaza, and of the eastern part of Jerusalem. The Arabs were the occupiers: the Jordanians in the "West Bank" and the Egyptians in Gaza.

■ The goal of the terror group known as the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was obviously not to "liberate" Judea/Samaria and Gaza, which were under Arab control, but to "wipe Israel off the map and to send the Jews back to Poland, where they belong". These goals and sentiments are embedded in the PLO Covenant. The PLO continues to oppose any policy that does not include the destruction of Israel or calls for the establishment of a "secular state" in Palestine instead of Israel. One would expect that to be on the model of Lebanon. It's not an attractive prospect for the Jews of Israel, or for its Arab citizens, for that matter.

■ In 1967, following the victorious Six-Day War, another war that had been imposed on Israel by the Arabs, Israel assumed the administration of Judea/Samaria and Gaza, and united the liberated city of Jerusalem as the nation's capital. Israel's intent, declared and repeated over and over, was to return most of these territories to Arab control, as part of a comprehensive peace treaty. But in the Arab League Khartoum conference, immediately following the war, the Arabs pronounced their "three unalterable no's": no recognition, no negotiation, and no peace with Israel. The purpose of the Arabs to "wipe Israel off the map" was re-asserted.

■ People in the United States believe that conflict between nations can be resolved or at least be kept from exploding. Even the cold war between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. takes place in a context of relative civility. But the enmity of the Arabs against Israel is of a different nature altogether. For the last 40 years, the Arabs have committed themselves almost single-mindedly to the destruction of Israel — by war, by terror, and now by mob violence, sending their women and teen-age children to throw Molotov cocktails at Israeli soldiers.

■ There is yearning for peace in Israel, a deep desire to be done with the wars that have been pressed on it without surcease since the very day of its birth. And Israel has proven that it is ready to make territorial concessions for peace. That's what happened with Egypt, to which Israel returned the vast Sinai Peninsula — over 90% of the territory taken by Israel in the Six-Day War — in exchange for recognition and peace. But much greater guarantees with responsible and immediately involved governments would be required to induce Israel to cede any territories in Gaza and Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"). Because without the "West Bank", Israel would be militarily indefensible. It would be only nine miles wide at its "waist". All of its major population centers, its industries, its military installations would be within easy mortar range of enemies on the "West Bank". Before Israel could make any further territorial concessions at all, it would have to have ironclad guarantees. And for that to happen, the Arabs must rethink the role of Israel in the Middle East and their relationship to it.

The root of the "problem" is not Israel's administration of the territories. The root is the Arabs' unalterable desire to destroy Israel. No country should be asked to commit national suicide in order to appease world public opinion. Israel is surrounded by implacable enemies. Does anybody really expect the Israelis to turn over the strategically crucial "West Bank" to those who are sworn to destroy it? No solution of the territorial dispute of the "West Bank" and Gaza is possible until the Arab nations give full recognition and acceptance to Israel and are genuinely willing to make peace and to establish full normalization of relations.

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to move in that kind of controversial direction." This from the man whose devotion to controversy has degenerated to mediating such sniveling symposia as "Mansharing," "Touching," and "The Right to Bare Breasts." Phil has been fighting a losing battle against blandness, with Oprah Winfrey (and lately Geraldo Rivera) whipping him on his own tacky turf. Then along comes Morton Downey making Phil look like a regular Socrates.

Suddenly, confro-talk is all the rage again. In addition to "Downey," two other head-butting talk shows have been tossed around the syndication market. "Liddy," a vehicle for the former Watergate co-conspirator and sometime "Miami Vice" guest star, will debut this fall. A debatefest called "Clashpoint," to be led by New York radio personality Bob Grant, was in the works but with only tentative backing. That all these figures, Downey included, should have got their start in radio is no coincidence. Talk radio has long been a right-wing bastion, an open forum for the masses to sound off against the dominant culture, to browbeat the Pablum-pukers. It's just possible that the greater American viewing public has grown weary of watching the same old parade of bullying feminists, defiant transsexuals, contrite spouse-abusers, heinous pederasts, and the inevitable coterie of social workers and pop psychologists who travel in their wake. It's just possible that, tired of being lectured by the ponderous hucksters of contemporary neuroses, they want the tables turned.

That's not to cast Morton Downey as a stark raving nutter. He is, as most people who have come in off-air contact with him attest, quite sane. "I won't say that Mort Downey is actually a good-humored man who can take it as well as dish it out," wrote Joe Conason of the *Village Voice* after an encounter with Mighty Mouth. "Because he made me promise not to." When Downey appeared as a guest on "Donahue," the result was a love-in of mutual admiration.

Underneath the TV terrorist demeanor, Downey is a pussycat. The eponymous son of the beloved Irish tenor, Sean Morton Downey was weaned with a silver spoon and spent summers alongside the Kennedys at Hyannis Port. Crude, vulgar, and bellicose though he may seem on screen, Downey is no Jersey thug.

According to John Corry, Downey is no conservative either. "There is nothing conservative about him," huffed Corry in his swan song as a TV critic (and token conservative) for the *New York Times*. "He satirizes right-wing politics," Corry complained. How's that? By calling liberals "Pablum-pukers"? By wrapping his derriere in the American flag and inviting an Iranian student to kiss it? By taking an extreme stand on capital punishment ("Fry their meat!")? All of the above. Corry resents the right being exposed to Downey's ideological "Gong Show," to what he calls "the new age of television tastelessness."

Tabloid TV, like its newsprint ancestor, does seem to be riding a wave of public infatuation. The Fox network's unabashedly sleazy "A Current Affair" paid $10,000 for a videotape of "preppy murderer" Robert Chambers frolicking at a private party with a quartet of tittering females in sexy lingerie. With astounding results and the blessing of the FBI, "America's Most Wanted" (also on Fox) enlists viewers' help in nabbing dangerous criminals by re-creating violent crimes in shocking video verité. Both shows have a large, loyal audience. The voyeuristic impulse is at work with "Downey," too. What *will* he do next? TV HOST OPENS HEART TO HIS DYING BROTHER, screamed page one of the *New York Post* in May, after a tearful "Downey" taping during which Tony Downey (a younger sibling) revealed that he had AIDS. It was pure secular televangelism—lachrymose and embarrassingly public.

And yet for all its pyrotechnics, there is some substance to Downey's incendiary style, a method to his mayhem. Critics who imagine Downey as a foam-at-the-mouth extremist have very likely never watched the show. When placed in the company of genuine fanatics—vile pornographers, racists, hair-shirt feminists—Downey is invariably the voice of moderation, soothing the savage breast of his impatient following. Of course he's no "deep thinker," as Corry sarcastically remarked. But neither, for all his immaculately polished diplomacy, is Ted Koppel. Downey's hype—the image of a crude, bullying neanderthal—neatly satisfies the liberal stereotype of what's wrong with the right, as well as the right's paranoia about what's wrong with itself. His populist, Elmer Gantry vulgate of the conservative canon embarrasses Movement elitists. But Downey doesn't debase The Cause; he enlivens it. He's hardly more inflammatory or Manichaean in world-view than, say, Pat Buchanan. Or the old Ronald Reagan. Indeed, he's a much-needed shot of adrenaline to the moribund Reagan era. What's more, his revivaltent advocacy does have a purpose: get people mad enough to blurt out what they really think, instead of neatly packaged sound bites that have become the worthless currency of "mainstream" TV. In fact, it works. After two decades of Donahue, Downey has arrived to even the score. □

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GORBY'S CASH GRAB

by Irwin M. Stelzer

Mikhail Gorbachev is willing to let Ronald Reagan take the credit for such progress as there was at the Moscow summit; all he wants in return is cash.

That the Soviet economy is in serious trouble there can be no doubt. Gorbachev himself has conceded that the Soviet Union is suffering from "economic failures," "slowing economic growth," "a shortage of goods," and that its economy is one in which "the consumer found himself totally at the mercy of the producer." And the mess is getting steadily worse. Abel Aganbegyan, his chief economic adviser (chairman of the Commission for the Study of Productive Forces and Resources, and head of the economics section of the Soviet Academy of Sciences), says that in 1981-85 "there was practically no economic growth." Per capita income actually declined. Since January 1986, when the new five-year plan was launched, growth is reported to have been about 2 percent per year; that's half of the plan's target rate. One expert on the Soviet economy says that perestroika is "beginning to look like a disaster."

This comes as no surprise to anyone even vaguely familiar with the history of failed efforts by a succession of Soviet rulers to get the country's economy moving. Lenin was himself the first "reformer": his New Economic Policy (NEP) was inaugurated in 1921 in response to widespread unrest among the starving peasants. It included many of the features we now associate with Gorbachev's perestroika—greater reliance on markets, joint ventures between the Soviet state and foreign capitalists, encouragement of cooperatives. But it most definitely did not include a permanent abandonment of authoritarian, central direction of the economy. As Lenin pointed out, "We are retreating . . . in order . . . to take a running start and make a bigger leap forward." The essence of NEP, in Theodore Draper's words, "was to use capitalists . . . against capitalism, to use capitalism against itself. . . . This was the rationale for inviting foreign capitalism into Soviet Russia in the form of mixed enterprises and economic concessions."

The NEP didn't long survive Lenin, and the improvements it brought in economic performance were soon swamped by Stalinism and World War II. Four subsequent efforts at reform—by Khrushchev (1957), Kosygin (1965), and Brezhnev (1973 and 1979)—all "proved disappointing," according to Ed Hewitt, author of the just-published *Reforming the Soviet Economy.*[1]

And now we have perestroika. I say "we" because without Western help its already-slim chances of success would be reduced to zero. Gorbachev needs foreign businessmen to invest in his country's factories, so that he can have goods to export and to sell to the Soviet workers he hopes will now work harder (they won't, unless they can buy something with the incentive wages they will receive); he needs hard-currency loans to finance the purchase of state-of-the-art Western machinery and capital goods; and he needs Western technology, especially computers.

The factory investment will have to be in the form of joint ventures with the Soviet state (only one of the ways in which perestroika borrows from NEP), and on stiff terms. The share of foreign capital may not exceed 49 percent. The manager of the enterprise must be a Soviet citizen. Profits will be taxed at a rate of 30 percent, with an additional 20 percent taken if they are transferred abroad. Most important—and contrary to the impression created by press reports about the opening of mobile pizza parlors and McDonald's—the areas in which foreigners will be permitted to invest are those chosen by the Soviet government for their strategic importance to its economy and security. Capitalists willing to serve the purposes of the Soviet state are welcome; others need not apply.

Vladimir Kamentsey, deputy chairman of the Soviet Council of Ministers responsible for foreign trade, is quite specific in identifying the areas in which the Soviet Union will allow large-scale joint ventures: oil and gas production, instrument making, automotive construction, medical equipment (seen as a potential export market and hard-currency earner), and farm equipment. To this list Aganbegyan adds chemicals.

American business is rushing to oblige. Although only some forty-six joint ventures worth only $30 million have been concluded since the beginning of 1987 (the figure comes from Ivan Ivanov, the number-two Soviet foreign trade official), more are in the works, some 300 if the Soviets are to be believed. Their long-time favorite industrialist, Occidental's Armand Hammer, has announced a number of big new oil and petrochemical projects, including a plastics facility in Western Siberia, this to be financed by a new multi-national chemical consortium. (Hammer also signed an agreement to build the Soviet Union's first golf course.) And the newly formed American Trade Consortium, which numbers among its members RJR Nabisco, Ford, Eastman Kodak, Johnson & Johnson, Chevron, and Archer Daniels Midland, expects at least a dozen joint ventures.

In addition, the Soviet Union plans to step up its own investment, particularly in machine building and metal working. There are three ways Gorbachev can finance this. He can divert resources from his country's enormous arms program and costly foreign adventures. He can forcibly raise the rate of domestic savings by cutting workers' already miserable consumption levels. Or he can borrow from foreign capitalists.

The first of these solutions is a real option only if the West continues to reduce its own defense establishment, something it is under no economic compulsion to do. Unlike the USSR, we can afford guns and butter. The second—reducing workers' living standards—is risky: there are already rumblings of discontent at the below-Third World living standards experienced by most Soviets.

So borrow Gorbachev must. And can. The Soviet Union has already increased its debt to the West from $15 billion in 1983 to twice that level. What has Western financiers drooling is that this may be only the beginning. A leading Soviet economist, Nikolai Shmelev, estimated in a recent article in *Moscow News* that the Soviet Union could, over the next few years, safely borrow $35-$50 billion to support perestroika.

Western bankers are eager to finance this strengthening of the Soviet economy. In January, the Soviets tested the waters with their first-ever trip to Western bond markets; they sold an issue totaling SFr100 million ($71 million) with ease—it was sold out in just four days. And they plan soon to sell a DM500 million ($294 million) issue carrying something like a 7 percent interest rate; Dresdner Bank and three other West German banks will be the lead managers.

Indeed, the Germans are the most active in beating the Russian bushes for business. But others are not far behind. Britain's Lloyds has lead-managed four Euromarket financings for Soviet institutions in recent years; Barclay's has set up a trade-finance subsidiary; and NatWest and Morgan Grenfell have Moscow representatives looking for deals. Even Michael Milken, the Drexel Burnham partner who created the junk-bond market, is interested. He suggested to Gorbachev that resource-rich Russia issue bonds backed by gold or oil.

There are, of course, skeptics—some of whom remember the Bolsheviks' repudiation of the $75 million debt run up by the czars, and others of whom won't play until the Soviets publish suf-

Irwin M. Stelzer, TAS's monthly business correspondent, is director of the Energy and Environmental Policy Center of the John F. Kennedy School, Harvard University, and an American correspondent for the London Sunday Times.

[1]Brookings Institution, $36.95; $16.95 paper.

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ficient financial information to permit them and the rating agencies to appraise the so-called Red Notes. But most observers expect a steady increase in Soviet borrowing, with a dollar-denominated bond issue in London later this year and, the political climate permitting, a "Gorbibond" issue in the U.S. thereafter.

While two of Gorbachev's desires are being met—more joint ventures, some Western financing—his third wish, access to Western technology, is being thwarted, at least for now, by the United States. Most members of the seventeen-nation Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (Cocom) want to relax restrictions on the export of high-technology products to the Soviet Union, but the U.S. has held out. The betting is, however, that the jovial atmosphere of the Moscow summit and the departure of hard-line Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger will soften the American position. Pressure for such relaxation is coming primarily from the French and West Germans, and order-hungry computer manufacturers of all nations.

The real question is whether the West should oblige Gorbachev, and, if so, on what terms. At the moment, the Soviet Union is spending about twice as much of its shriveled GNP on arms as the U.S. Indeed, it was the inability of the Soviet economy to match Reagan's defense build-up that brought the USSR to the disarmament bargaining table, forced it to withdraw from Afghanistan, and is compelling it to reduce support of client states such as Cuba. Without foreign financing of his perestroika, Gorbachev will be under even greater pressure to make concessions on arms control in order to lighten his military burdens.

Fortunately, sober observers have begun to question the wisdom of President Reagan's statement to a group of Soviet students that "nothing will please my heart more than . . . to see a growing, exporting, exuberant Soviet Union." Lord Carrington, the departing NATO secretary general, speaking at the NATO Council's spring meeting, warned that "the Soviet . . . military machine is still, so far, operating at exactly the same level as it was in the days before perestroika and glasnost." Colin Powell, Reagan's national security adviser, also cautioned the West not to help the USSR modernize its economy until there is hard evidence that it had cut defense expenditures. And Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci, hardly a hard-liner, had this reaction to the summit's rosy glow: "If the end result is that . . . the Soviet Union modernizes its industrial and technological base, and if sometime in the 1990s it . . . can produce enormous quantities of weapons even more effectively than it does today, then we will have made an enormous miscalculation."

Clearly, Gorbachev understands that a stronger Soviet economy means a stronger military machine. Hewitt is on target when he points out, "Gorbachev knows full well that military and economic capabilities are intertwined. . . . For Gorbachev, a dramatic improvement in Soviet economic performance is not only good politics; it is an important component of his approach to Soviet national security."

But the West's capitalists are blinded by the prospects for huge profits. Charles Hugel, the president of Combustion Engineering—which hopes to participate in perhaps $20 billion worth of chemical plants in Siberia—has begun to speak out for the repeal of the Jackson-Vanick amendment. That legislation, which ties preferential trade status for the Soviet Union to its emigration policies, is an increasing source of irritation to Gorbachev, and an increasing inconvenience to American firms who want to do business with his country. Those firms will undoubtedly also oppose Senator James McClure's effort to make the Soviets pay with political concessions for the cash and technology they so badly need. McClure would link trade concessions not only to the Soviet Union's willingness to let its imprisoned Jewish population emigrate, but to its compliance with the Helsinki agreement on human rights.

"They really need Western help and they're reaching out for it," Hugel recently told reporters. He and others in the world's business and financial community have apparently forgotten Lenin's frank admission that cooperation with capitalists is to be pursued only so long as it contributes to their eventual destruction. Forgotten, too, is the simple fact that poorer, backward countries are, after all, less dangerous adversaries than richer, advanced ones. □

EUROPEAN DOCUMENT

PRAGUE SPRINGS BACK

by Eric Chenoweth

In the Old World splendor of Prague, the Czechoslovak regime makes sure to remind its citizens that they live in the New Order. In February, the point was made easily enough by the banners hung in celebration of the 1948 coup of Klement Gottwald, which installed the Communist party in full power after three years of a postwar coalition government. On every national monument, in the stores, in the newspapers, and on the walls, remarkably creative and colorful posters marked "February 1948" or "Forty Years of Socialism." Next to them were the more common government invocations: Onward march toward the fulfillment of socialism. Eternal friendship with the Soviet Union. Eternal thanks to the Red Army. (This last refers to 1945 and not 1968, but the message is clear enough.)

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On the anniversary in February, the Czechoslovak Communist party reminded the populace that whatever new winds may be blowing from the East, Czechs shall remain snug within the full Communist legacy of 1948. While the official propaganda now speaks of "democratization" and all the other buzzwords of perestroika, Miklos Jakes, Gustav Husak's successor as general secretary of the party, has made clear he will follow Husak's path. Which is not surprising: Jakes himself was in charge of the party purges and the routing of Czech and Slovak intellectuals in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion in August 1968 that put down the Prague Spring.

Thus Czechoslovakia remains one of the most orthodox East European countries. The consequences for any opposition are severe; imprisonment, internal exile, job dismissal, and all the other repressive mechanisms at the government's disposal are fairly routine. Those active in Charter 77, which loosely unites the opposition, are constantly surveilled and followed. The children of opposition activists are not spared either, and are even denied admittance to secondary trade schools (not that official education is anything to cherish).

The Czechs and Slovaks have had to endure a contradictory history. Caught in the religious and ideological battles of European history, a small country between the great powers of the last five centuries, Czechoslovakia is often seen as a pliant country, and observers cite as evidence the population's unwillingness to take arms against the insuperable Hitler, Stalin, and Brezhnev. Yet within their history is a long tradition of resistance, dating back to the religious reformation led by Jan Hus, and many valiant efforts to retain the rich and complex culture of both peoples. It is in this spirit that a new generation of opposition is emerging, forty years after the February putsch and twenty years after the Soviet invasion.

One sign of this revivified resistance was a demonstration held in Prague's Old Square on December 10 last year, International Human Rights Day. Over two thousand people gathered, the largest such manifestation since 1969, when Husak put down the last remnants of opposition to the Soviet invasion. Although police detained forty people before the march and arrested a number of others for displaying banners calling for democracy and the release of political prisoners, no force was used to disperse the crowd. (Several of those arrested have been

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sentenced, one man on a charge of "promoting fascism," in this case for allegedly raising the Nazi salute while unfurling a banner. Eyewitnesses said the salute was a mocking gesture to police who were taking him away, but the authorities failed to get the joke.) Most of the participants were young, and many came from outside Prague. To avoid expected police road blocks, these younger demonstrators even arranged their vacations well ahead of time to get to Prague several days before.

The younger generation is also behind many of Czechoslovakia's new underground publications, continuing a heroic tradition of *samizdat* begun in the 1970s by outcast intellectual stokers and manual laborers. One, *Vokno* (Window), is both a cultural journal and a countercultural journal—aimed at young and old alike. Begun by members of the rock band "Plastic People of the Universe," *Vokno* publishes reviews, poetry, censored rock lyrics, art, and historical essays of young artists and intellectuals despite continued harassment of its editors. Another cultural review, *Revolver Revue*, a quarterly of 300-350 pages, seeks to meet the needs of the younger generation for cultural activities and writings the government doesn't allow.

The sons and daughters of the 1968 generation of Communists have taken the road of opposition as well, and without the political blinders of their parents. One result, published in cooperation with the generation of journalists from 1968, is *Lidove Noviny* ("People's News"), which, with 1,000 copies distributed, is the largest of the underground papers. The name is taken from Czechoslovakia's liberal and democratic past, and the paper tries to reclaim the old paper's spirit as well. In the tradition of Charter 77, its editors publish their names (and addresses, in case the police lost them), and in fact they seek to publish openly, but without censorship. (The Censorship Office has informed its editor-in-chief, Jiri Ruml, that it too would like a new publications law, but that such a law may be difficult to enact in the next few years.)

More troublesome for the Czechoslovak authorities is the current movement for Catholic revival. (Catholics make up 40 percent of Czechoslovakia's population.) After forty years, during which the Communist government rivaled any other in Eastern Europe in its repression of the Church, Frantisek Cardinal Tomasek has joined a growing legion of lay Catholic activists in demanding greater religious freedom. One wouldn't have expected the 88-year-old Cardinal Tomasek to take any strong public stand, what with his many years of appeasing the Ministry of Culture, which oversees Church affairs. He had, for example, given Church sanction to publication of the pro-government encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, which is no longer sanctioned by the Vatican.

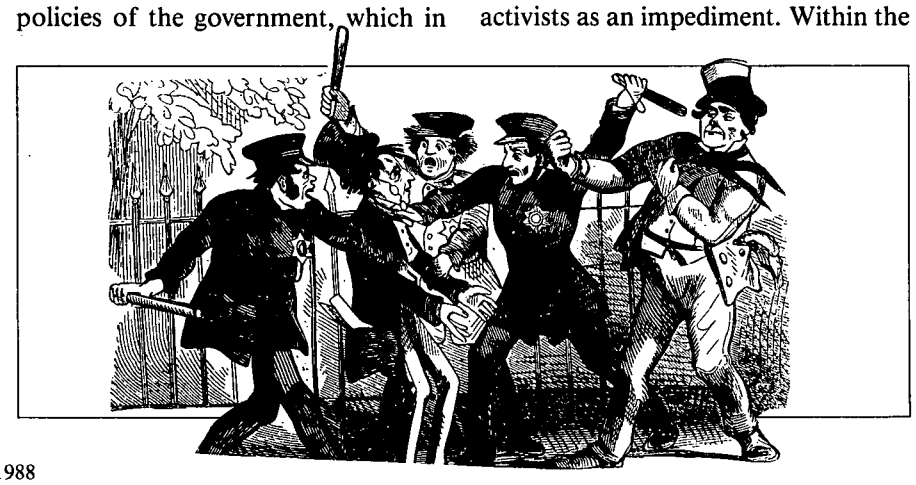
In December a lay Catholic activist, Augustin Navratil, a member of Charter 77, proposed with several colleagues a 31-point petition of demands for religious freedom, addressing the long list of believer grievances. Among the demands: seminaries must be allowed to function freely (only one currently exists, and admissions are controlled by the minister of culture); the government must allow the naming of new bishops (seven seats are vacant, and the three remaining bishops are all over 75 years old); the government must cease its rejection of priests seeking registration (a large majority of priests are now in fact ordained underground or secretly in Poland or at the Vatican); the Church must be allowed to provide religious instruction to children (which is only done within the state schools and with the greatest of difficulty); and believers must be allowed full freedom to worship without recrimination (for example, teachers are fired if it is found out that their children have been baptized).

Navratil and other colleagues could not have foreseen the reaction; indeed, they expected no more than a few thousand signatures. Instead, the petition has been signed by over 500,000, mostly Catholics but also Protestants and non-believers. Cardinal Tomasek gave his blessing to the petition, stating that his many requests had gone unanswered by the government; it was up to "you, the laymen" to act. "It is a very important duty of our conscience to make your voice heard to the government," Tomasek said. "Cowardice and fear do not befit the true Christian." With this affirmation, the petition was openly circulated in parishes by priests and laymen, sparking the long pent-up feelings of Czechoslovakia's Catholics. Tomasek himself has presented the signatures to the government.

The official response has been predictable: Instead of seeking some compromise, the authorities claim that those who initiated the petition campaign purposely lie about the religious policies of the government, which in fact, goes the line, has excellent relations with the Church. Tomasek, moreover, is courting "clerico-fascists."

And predictably, the response has been more than verbal: On April 25, a silent demonstration in Bratislava was brutally attacked by police, leaving many wounded. Individual action has been taken against the petition's initiators. Navratil, who already has been imprisoned in psychiatric hospitals on three occasions, was arrested and charged with "inciting disorder" and "insulting a policeman."

In addition, before a mass for the Blessed Anezka, called by Tomasek to initiate a ten-year period of spiritual renewal, more than forty Charter 77 members were detained for 48-hour periods, because the authorities fear an alliance between the Charter and the Church. They may be too late in any case, despite opposition among some secular Charter members to the positions of the Church. For three years, Tomasek has met with the group of three Charter spokesmen named each year; after this year's audience, the Charter issued a statement supporting the petition campaign, repeating its demands for the religious freedom of believers.



It is still unclear what may arise from this revived spirit of opposition. With the twentieth anniversary of the Soviet invasion upon us, the Communist party continues to maintain its power, privilege, and conservatism, and shows no sign of any reconsideration of 1968. Indeed, one could say some Soviet government spokesmen have shown a greater willingness to discuss the issue than has the Czech government, which insists on reiterating the full justification for the "intervention against counterrevolution."

Yet many Charter 77 and Catholic activists sense a new opening to be found in the government's contradictory policies toward Gorbachev, fueled by an impending breakdown in the East Bloc's economies. The question is how to take advantage of these openings and unite around a common program of opposition. In this, the Charter's eclectic character is seen by the younger, more militant generation of activists as an impediment. Within the Charter are many former party members who continue to believe in 1968's dream of "Communism with a human face." For them the demand for human rights is sufficient; today's younger activists see the need for something more substantive. The older generation of former (or current) Communists reminds them only of the stereotype of the compliant Czech.

An example of the strong political disagreements within Charter 77 was its inability to forge a common statement to mark the February 25, 1948 coup. A group of former party members, organized under the banner of the Democratic Alternative, issued a statement describing February 1948 as a legitimate revolution, with laudatory socialist aims, supported by a majority of the people. In contrast, two Charter spokesmen, Stanislav Devaty and Bohumir Janat, wrote that those who looked to the "arches of Victorious February" should "spare a thought" for the "vanquished of February . . . for the forcibly collectivized farmers, for the shopkeepers and craftsmen [who] . . . had their businesses expropriated, for the innumerable non-Marxist intellectuals relegated to a menial place in society, for the persecuted Christians, and for the innocent multitudes who were jailed and—God forgive—executed."

The debate is a real one, with serious strategic consequences. Not surprisingly, those in the Democratic Alternative see reform at the top as the most effective strategy, and thus view Gorbachev as reforming Communism. To be fair, their reformed Communism is much more radical than anything Gorbachev has yet proposed. But as one disparaging activist told me, "Since Gorbachev, they all took their diplomatic suits out of the closet and are waiting by the phone to be called to service."

It is the new generation of secular and religious activists, some professing social-democratic politics and others professing free-market views, who want to press for real change from below. One such is Jan Urban, a young bricklayer-intellectual, who in a stroke of bravado attended the Moscow conference on human rights organized by the Glasnost Club of Lev Temoveyev. (Since then, he has been detained four times for 48-hour periods—a sign, he says, of the police's confusion in this new period, since he wasn't formally charged and was thus let go. Such are the degrees of tolerance.) In Urban's view, "Too many people think that it is our job to come up with solutions for all of Czechoslovakia's growing problems. I always say that it is our job to make problems and not to solve them." With this spirit, there is hope still. □

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LINE-ITEM IMAGININGS

by Ronald Moe and Louis Fisher

One of the dramatic highlights of President Reagan's final State of the Union Address last January was yet another plea to Congress to approve a constitutional amendment granting the President a line-item veto. "Give the President the same authority that forty-three governors use in their states," Reagan said, "the right to reach into massive appropriations bills, pare away the waste, and enforce budget discipline. Let's approve the line-item veto." A thunderous ovation rose from both sides of the aisle.

In a theatrical gesture to illustrate his frustration, the President brought to the podium three "behemoths": a conference report, a reconciliation bill, and the continuing resolution, the total weight coming to some forty-three pounds. In these documents, he asserted, are to be found those egregious "pork" provisions that would have been eliminated had he a line-item veto. As examples of the type of waste to be trimmed, he referred to "millions for items such as cranberry research, blueberry research, the study of crawfish, and the commercialization of wild flowers." The President also promised to send to Congress, in thirty days, a formal request to rescind billions of dollars in wasteful spending. The targeted programs and projects would be those which he would have "item vetoed" had he the authority.

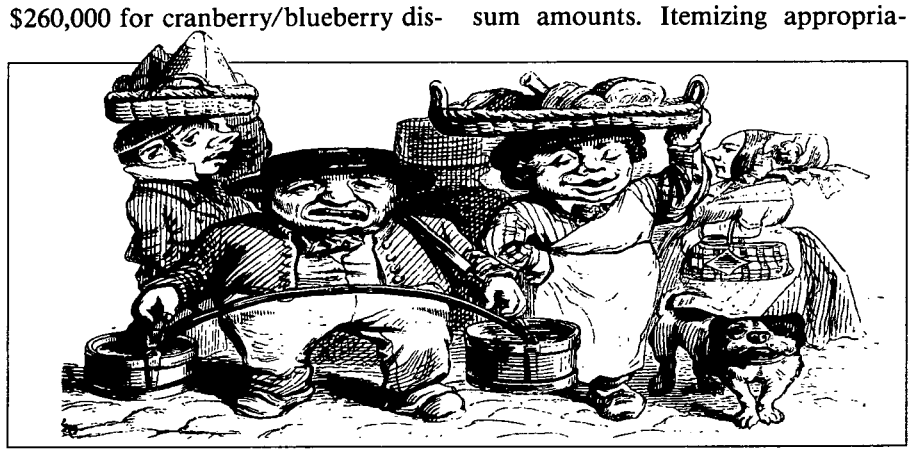
But there's an interesting catch to the President's indignation about these spending excesses. Notwithstanding the publicity awarded the four research grants he identified, he could not have eliminated them even with the item veto. The reasons why illustrate the confusion that currently dominates the debate about budgeting.

In December 1987 Congress passed, and the President signed into law, the continuing resolution appropriating funds for fiscal 1988. To be vulnerable to a line-item veto, the four programs under attack would have had to be mentioned in the law. The continuing resolution, however, said nothing about cranberries, blueberries, crawfish, or wildflowers.

Instead, the four programs were funded under the agriculture section of the continuing resolution, within an account called Cooperative State Research Service (CSRS). This account provides $303,654,000 for various categories of spending. A President with item-veto authority could have deleted the entire $303 million, abolishing good programs and bad. But he could not have singled out the cranberries and crawfish because they were not specifically mentioned.

To find them we have to look deeper. The CSRS account earmarks, as one part of the larger item, $31,185,000 for contracts and grants for agricultural research. Could the President have vetoed this "item within an item"? Maybe, maybe not. In states where governors possess the item veto, courts have handed down conflicting opinions on the authority of governors to delete parts of an item. But even if Reagan could have made such a deletion, we are still a long way from pinpointing the four programs he objected to. That level of detail is included in the conference report, a supporting document that explains how Congress expects the money to be spent.

A table in the conference report subdivides the $31 million among sixty programs, including $92,000 for research on the blueberry shoestring virus to be conducted in Michigan, $260,000 for cranberry/blueberry disease and breeding in New Jersey, and $50,000 for native wildflowers in New Mexico. Since those items were not identified in the bill sent to the President, an item veto could not have touched them. (The table says nothing, incidentally, about crawfish. It does mention $660,000 for aquaculture, and an industrious reader will discover that this amount includes $200,000 for "research in Louisiana." Only after checking with the Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture did we confirm that the money was for the fabled crawfish.)



There is a way, of course, to empower the President to veto small grant programs like the blueberries: take all the detail in the conference report and put it in the bill presented to the President for his signature. Instead of a single item of $303 million for Cooperative State Research Service, you would first earmark this to the sub-items, such as the $31 million for special research grants, and then into sub-sub-items, such as the sixty specific programs. In the case of "aquaculture research," you would have to descend to sub-sub-sub-items in order to find the crawfish study. This solution would produce a bill not of fourteen pounds, which President Reagan ridiculed, but double or triple that.

Even more serious, however, itemization would deprive agency officials—members of the executive branch—of the latitude and discretion they now have, and want to retain, with lump-sum amounts. Itemizing appropriations bills would lock every project and program into public law, leaving executive departments with a detailed statutory menu of how funds are to be spent. If circumstances and public needs change, what then? Even the smallest change would force the officials to return to Congress and re-do the legislation. No one in either branch wants this kind of inflexibility. Running the federal government with itemized appropriations—a prerequisite of the line-item veto—is neither desirable nor feasible.

And what of the celebrated "pork list" Reagan had vowed to send to Congress within thirty days of the State of the Union address, the "multi-billion dollar package" of items he wanted to veto but couldn't? The package was finally submitted in March. In his accompanying message, Reagan told Congress that "these are the projects that, if I were able to exercise line veto authority, I would delete." The list totalled $1.5 billion. (The projected deficit is about $150 billion.)

Of this amount, fully $643 million was accounted for in one purported "item" contained in the Small Business Administration appropriation. The continuing resolution prohibited the SBA from selling its loans to the private sector. OMB estimated that the federal government would be $643 million dollars richer if the prohibition could be "item vetoed."

This proposal to delete legislative language, and not just dollar amounts, raises a serious issue about the President's authority to rewrite legislation. The ban on selling SBA loans is a policy provision and does not directly involve an appropriation. Exercising the item veto in this fashion would give the President the power to "edit" bills to his taste by deleting words and phrases he finds, for whatever reason, unacceptable.

Consider the effect of this power. If Congress, for instance, provided $50 million for the resistance in Nicaragua, but included a proviso that the aid

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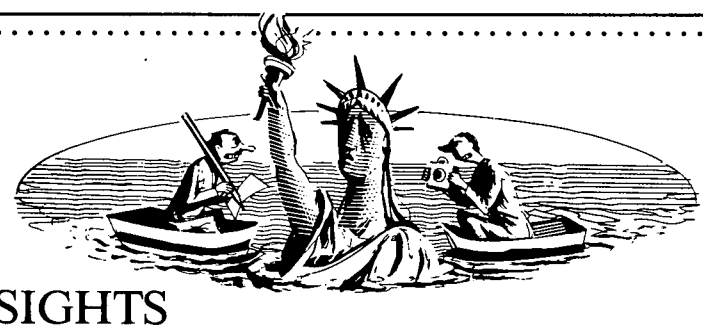
could be used only for "non-lethal" purposes, the President could delete the restrictive language and keep the funds. Or say a Medicaid bill were passed, after much congressional give-and-take, containing language prohibiting the use of such funds for abortions. A President could simply strike the proviso and use Medicaid funds for abortions. In both instances the President would be converting a conditional appropriation into an unconditional grant of funds. He would nullify the compromise that allowed Congress to pass the appropriation in the first place.

The item veto would mean, if nothing else, many more vetoes. At present, Presidents do not invoke the veto power frivolously, and Congress treats vetoes with respect. To override a presidential veto generally requires considerable political leadership and effort and also precious legislative time. Congress goes to some length to avoid presidential vetoes, often by deleting items that are offensive to the executive branch.

Giving the President item veto authority would profoundly alter these conditions. What is now unusual will become routine. With itemized appropriation bills, a typical bill would offer hundreds of opportunities for an item veto. The President is currently presented with approximately 300 bills a year. With item-veto authority, he might easily have 10,000 candidates to veto. If he vetoed only ten percent, Congress would confront a thousand override decisions. The sheer impracticality of this system overload should give its supporters pause.

President Reagan was correct when he said that the budget process has broken down. His solution, however, is faulty and serves to divert our attention from plausible solutions to our chronic budget deficit problems. Thomas Jefferson, always a man to take seriously, advised that in seeking reforms one should be sure the patch is commensurate with the hole. The item veto is a poor fit. □

PRESSWATCH



MYSTERIES AND OVERSIGHTS

by Michael Ledeen

The campaign for some kind of oversight for the media, resulting in the establishment of some standard of accountability, is gathering momentum. It recently received a ringing endorsement from the *Financial Times* of London, which is as fervent a defender of freedom of the press as one could ask for. On April 27, the *Financial Times* lead editorial ("The Conduct of Newspapers") put it beautifully:

> Some of the failings of the press hardly need to be rehearsed. There is the intrusion into privacy, which is resented by those at the top of society as well as those less elevated. There is the manufacturing and embroidering of quotations. Not least, there is the use of money to persuade individuals to supply their story to one particular paper. None of that is defensible.

Remember that last line, please: "None of that is defensible." And if you don't change your ways, you guys in the media, the legislature is going to get you. The *FT* has figured this out, even if our own media mavens haven't:

> Statutory regulation would almost certainly lead to the suppression of some stories that ought to be published. It would also produce a running conflict between the press and the regulatory authorities. . . . Yet the pressure for regulation is mounting.

The British have something called the Press Council, to which aggrieved parties can appeal, and which issues statements (which are supposed to be printed by the newspapers or magazines). But it is not particularly effective, and the press generally ignores it whenever possible. As the *FT* editorialists note, if this institution, with its calls for voluntary standards of conduct, cannot be strengthened, then "the case against statutory action will begin to lapse." In other words, Parliament will step in.

We are in a similar predicament, but without the clear voice of our own *FT*, and without a Press Council. We had better get cracking. If you listen closely to Capitol Hill, you will hear the sound of paper shuffling . . .

First Anniversary of The Safe Sex for Michael Kinsley Packet

Lest we forget, it was just one year ago when that modern seer, the oracle of the *New Republic*, Michael Kinsley, announced to the world that within one year AIDS would disappear as a major issue in the American media. With that flair for iron-clad logic for which he is so well known and respected by thoughtful persons everywhere, Kinsley proclaimed that since "nuclear war" had disappeared as an issue, AIDS could not help but follow suit. After all, wasn't nuclear war even more threatening than AIDS?

The year has passed, and the AIDS issue shows no signs of going away. Indeed, we are now in some danger of being drowned in the press coverage of the disease, and even retired admirals are issuing pronunciamentos.

So please send Michael another Safe Sex Kit for Bastille Day, to remind him of the fallibility of human judgment. And the seriousness of AIDS.

Money to the Soviet Union

Slowly but surely Congress is beginning to focus its attention on the vitally important issue of credits and loans to the Soviet Union. Senator Bill Bradley has given some intelligent speeches on the subject, and on May 27, Tom McMillen wrote a first-class op-ed piece in the *Baltimore Sun* in which he concluded:

> Capital is as much a commodity as wheat or gold. Allowing it to flow freely to the Soviet bloc deprives us of an important policy tool and reward. The customer of any lending institution must state what he will use the funds for: we should ask no less of Soviet-bloc borrowers.

In other words, don't give unattached loans to the Soviet bloc unless it com-

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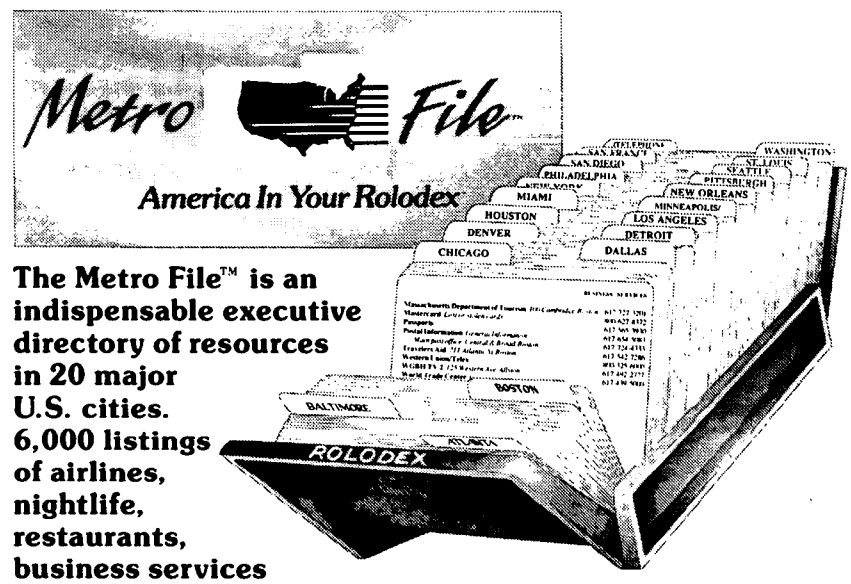

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plies with its international agreements (such as Helsinki).

Maybe we need more basketball players in high positions?

Harry G. Summers, Jr.

A word of tribute is due to Harry G. Summers, Jr., the celebrated former Army colonel who writes for *U.S. News & World Report* (and who in the June *American Spectator* penned an eloquent piece on conservatives and containment). Colonel Summers wrote a fine column on American drug policy in early June (I read it in the June 2 *Washington Times*) in which he lamented the lack of seriousness in our government. Two paragraphs are particularly noteworthy for their down-to-earth reminder of what is real and what is fantasy. Complaining about congressional calls for the use of the armed forces to interdict drug shipments into the United States, Summers noted that if the military actually sealed off our borders by using armed force, Congress would be the first to denounce such "wanton aggression." Then come the paragraphs in question:

> Congress . . . should understand the fundamental nature of military forces—to kill and destroy in the name of the American people. If you intend to do that when an aggressor threatens vital interests or survival is at stake, then it's a proper job for the military.
>
> But if you don't have the resolve to stand by an indictment, or the backbone to carry through your threat to confiscate property, why would anyone believe you'd actually use military power to kill drug smugglers and destroy their boats, planes, and paraphernalia?

Quite right.

Mysteries

•You may have noticed that in the past two months the press coverage of the Red Army withdrawing from Afghanistan has been quite extraordinary. The *Los Angeles Times* had a three-part series, all the networks and major media had extended interviews with Soviet soldiers, and suddenly the *mujahedeen* have names and faces. A moment's reflection will suffice to explain this sudden outburst of information from an area that had been very hard to penetrate for our journalists: The Russians let them in.

•All the major newspapers were shocked by the results of the French parliamentary elections. They were expecting—indeed, having seen the data from the usually highly accurate political polls, they had predicted—a Socialist landslide, and when the Socialists failed to get even a majority, they didn't know what to do. It was a case where the results were taken for granted, the stories written well before the event, and the editors' attention was on other matters. On the morning after the first round, you had to read several inches down to find out what had actually happened, and what a surprise it was. Flora Lewis later wrote darkly about the need for an official investigation into the pollsters (for what—being wrong?), but she should have worried more about reportage. Prophecy has always been a tough profession, after all.

Carl Rowan

Someone should explain to Mr. Rowan—the intrepid gunman of Chevy Chase—that nobody objects to his having a gun in his home for his own protection (although having a pistol suggests either that he's an expert marksman or that he doesn't know what he's doing). He did two things wrong: he didn't register, and he lectured the world on how wrong it was for *it* to have guns. His angry sermon to his readers, announcing he would keep his weapon so long as there were killers and drug dealers on the loose, missed the point. No one begrudges him the right to defend himself, his family, and his property. We only ask that he apply the same standards to everyone, and abide by the law. Judge not, Carl . . .

Singapore

I love Singapore (and was happy to see the *Washington Post*'s fine food editor, Phyllis Richman, give Singapore credit for having perhaps the best food in the world), and was disturbed to see its exceptional prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, get so irritated with the *Asian Wall Street Journal* that he banned all but a token number of copies from the country. And then, when an American diplomat was found to have encouraged opposition politicians, the roof fell in: the poor Foreign Service officer was expelled, and there was a full-scale brouhaha, which currently (mid-June) stands at an impasse, with Singapore calling for an international commission to investigate the matter.

Mr. Lee made a mistake when he threw out the *Journal*, and he as much as admitted it by early June when he said in a parliamentary address that "we can denounce stupid newspapermen, the offshore press. They irritate us, they annoy us, but remember they can't really do us much harm." But America *can* harm him, and, like most national leaders, Lee Kuan Yew has learned that Americans often don't know what they're doing. So let's listen for a moment to the way he described it to his own people. It's hard to do it better (text from the *Straits Times*, June 2):

> Although Americans mean well, they want the world to be like them, because they believe it will make for a better world.
>
> We must be careful, because some of their best-intentioned schemes turn out to be naive and unwise, and end up disastrously. You heard what happened in Iran. They meant well. They wanted Iran to become a modern state. . . . Whole faculties were starting up, all kinds of esoteric subjects . . . you name it, the Americans will deliver. . . . What was missing? Democratic rights, freedom of speech, freedom of association.
>
> So they egged on opposition groups and the Shah. . . . They started meddling around, they meant well. President Jimmy Carter came along with the human rights campaign, the Shah got confused and bewildered. . . . The Ayatollah came back. And gut feelings, not rational democratic impulses. . . . Now, 40 odd million Iranians have gone back to the Dark Ages . . .
>
> So we have to use our own judgment . . .

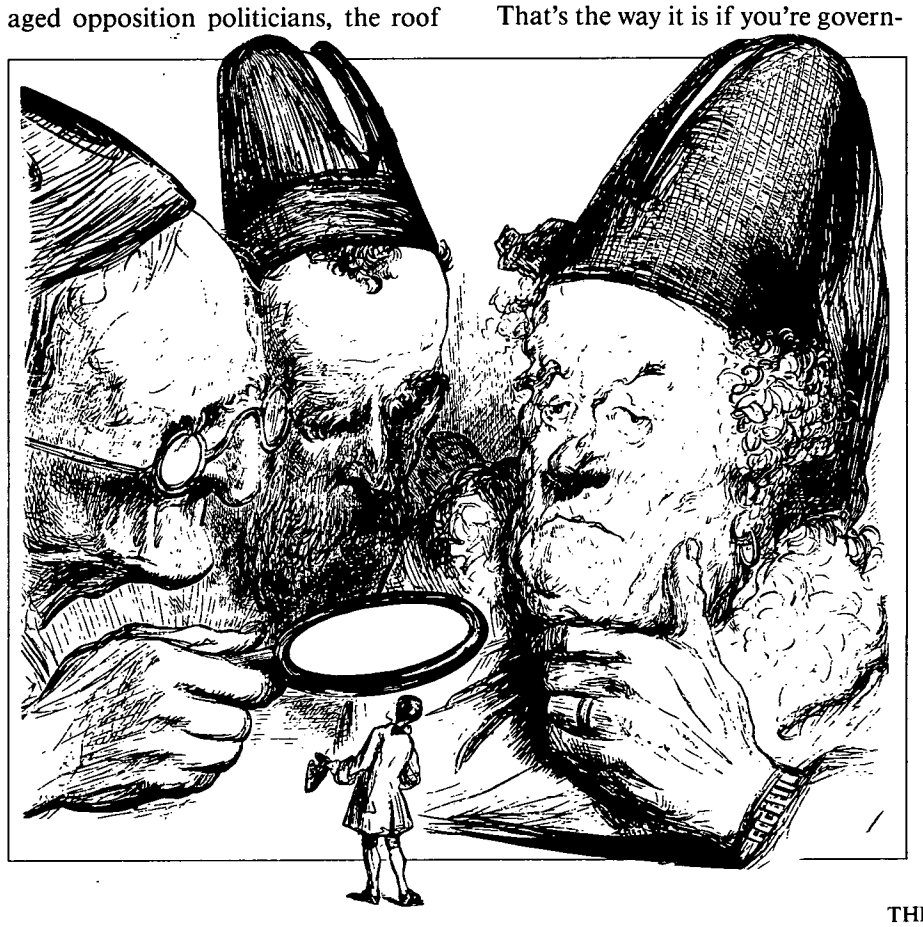
That's the way it is if you're governing a country with good relations with the United States, but which does not meet American standards of democracy. I can well imagine that Lee Kuan Yew, who Henry Kissinger once called "the smartest man in the Western world," is frightened that the American contagion might reach his shores. We can perhaps survive the chaos we unleash, but less stable and self-confident societies might not.

I also can understand the *Wall Street Journal*'s concern that Lee Kuan Yew shows signs of undoing what might have been Asia's finest achievement. Nonetheless, it was with a real shock that I found *Journal* editorialists comparing Singaporean restrictions on freedom of speech with those of Eastern Europe. In a series of editorials, the *Journal* argued that since Lee Kuan Yew was intolerant of political opposition, and used preventive detention against persons who, in the *Journal*'s view, were guilty only of criticizing the government, Singapore was to be condemned and put on the same plane as East Germany or Poland.

The *Journal* has gotten carried away by its laudable desire to protect free speech everywhere. Most countries in the world, including places like Italy, France, and Spain, have preventive detention, and it is relatively easy in those countries to find cases of individuals who have spent years in jail without ever hearing any solid evidence against them. The phenomenon in Italy is so well known, in fact, that one of the very best Italian movies—*A Citizen Above Any Suspicion*, starring Alberto Sordi—was about a former Italian citizen who, after years of living in Sweden, takes his Swedish wife and children on a return trip to Italy. He is arrested at the border, thrown from one prison to the next, and never does find out why.

Such phenomena do exist, even in long-established societies. They also exist in Singapore, and they are just as wrong there as anywhere else. But no mature person would equate Italy or France with Eastern Europe, and Singapore shouldn't be, either. Singapore's problems are those of a fundamentally democratic society which is still evolving, still finding its sea legs in the turbulent waters of the late twentieth century. Its leaders make mistakes, but however disturbing, those are exceptional, not part of the basic pattern of life. In Eastern Europe, such actions are the rule. The *Journal* should understand that, and not vent its spleen on a man and a country that have contributed a great deal to the security and wisdom of the Western world.

That's what happens when corporate interests overwhelm geopolitical judgment. □



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SUMMER FLICKS

by Bruce Bawer

When it comes to your typical summer movie, the question is not whether the filmmakers have come up with a new idea, but whether they've managed to do anything interesting with an old one. And there's no question but that *Funny Farm* makes use of one of the most ancient and wheezy of story ideas: an urban couple, eager to escape the rat race and get acquainted with nature, move to the countryside, only to discover that (in the words of the current movie's ad copy) life in the country isn't all it's cracked up to be. Now, if you've seen a few episodes of the Eddie Albert–Eva Gabor sitcom "Green Acres" (or the old movie *The Egg and I*), you know that this story idea comes equipped with a less-than-infinite number of comic complications, to wit: the charming house that our couple move into proves to be in astonishingly primitive condition; their simple, goodhearted country neighbors are revealed to be morons, hucksters, and screwballs; the natural world that appeared so beautiful shows itself to be dangerous and uncomfortable.

Though our heroes, this time around, are played by the ever-genial Chevy Chase and by an oddly lackluster actress named Madolyn Smith, *Funny Farm* is pretty much a "Green Acres" retread. If Manhattan-lawyer-turned-gentleman-farmer Eddie Albert had to climb up a telephone pole every time he wanted to place a call from his Hooterville hovel, so Chevy Chase—in the role of Andy Farmer, a sometime Upper West Side sportswriter who has retired to the countryside with his wife, Elizabeth, to write his first novel—must get used to feeding quarters into the public phone which has inexplicably been installed in his kitchen.

Jeffrey Boam's screenplay, then, is exceedingly derivative. What's more, it's very episodic, moving from gag to gag with all the shamelessness of a Henny Youngman. Plot doesn't count for much here, nor does character: Boam takes the Farmers and their feelings no more seriously than the writer of a Road Runner cartoon takes a fall from a cliff by Wile E. Coyote; it doesn't seem to occur to him not to have Andy or Elizabeth do something funny (e.g., hit a dog over the head with a frying pan) simply because it would be out of character. If the center of the story keeps shifting, moreover, it's apparently for no other reason than that Boam, at various junctures, happened to come up with boffo plot twists that had little or nothing to do with the direction the story happened to be taking theretofore. Even the broadest of movie farces generally operates by stricter rules than this.

If *Funny Farm* nonetheless has its moments—inspired, original, wonderfully loony moments—the main reason may be stated in three words: George Roy Hill. In fact, this film is something of a textbook lesson in the difference that a top-notch director can make to a basically feeble screenplay. Throughout the movie, you can feel the wit of the director working its magic upon the witless material. To be fair, some of Boam's inventions (e.g., a scene involving an order of lamb fries) would likely be amusing even in the hands of a Carl Reiner; but the majority of them (e.g., the world's one-millionth Dutch-door gag) are funny and memorable primarily because of the way Hill visualizes and times them. Of course, the director of *The World According to Garp* shouldn't be wasting his time on such mediocre fare in the first place—but that's another story.

Like *Funny Farm*, *Big Business* tries to find humor in the contrast between city and country. Try to follow this: forty-odd years ago, in Jupiter Hollow, West Virginia, a dirt-poor local woman named Ratliff and a rich Manhattanite named Shelton are both delivered of twin daughters named Rose and Sadie; a befuddled nurse switches two of the infants, so that each mother unwittingly goes home with one baby that's hers and one that isn't. Cut to the present: in Manhattan, Sadie Shelton (Bette Midler) is the brassy, obnoxious chief executive officer of her family's huge conglomerate, the Moramax Corporation; her meek, friendly "sister" Rose (Lily Tomlin), who's never felt quite at home in New York or in the corporate world, is more interested in collecting stray dogs than in her role as the firm's v.p. Things are the other way around down in Jupiter Hollow: there Rose Ratliff (Lily Tomlin) is a take-charge type, at harmony with her surroundings, while her "sister" Sadie Ratliff (Bette Midler) feels out of place and aches to see the big city. Sadie's opportunity comes when her urban namesake decides to sell off one of Moramax's smaller holdings, the Hollowmade Furniture Company in Jupiter Hollow. Since Hollowmade is the burg's chief industry, Rose Ratliff is deeply concerned about Moramax's plans; with Sadie in tow, she travels to New York on the eve of Moramax's big stockholders' meeting to seek assurances that Hollowmade will not be closed down following the sale.

If the opening sequences sound cumbersomely expository, they are. The purpose of these sequences, needless to say, is as simple as the sequences themselves are complicated: to place twin Lilys and twin Bettes in adjoining hotel suites, unaware of each other's existence, and set them loose on an increasingly confused supporting

Bruce Bawer is The American Spectator*'s movie reviewer.*

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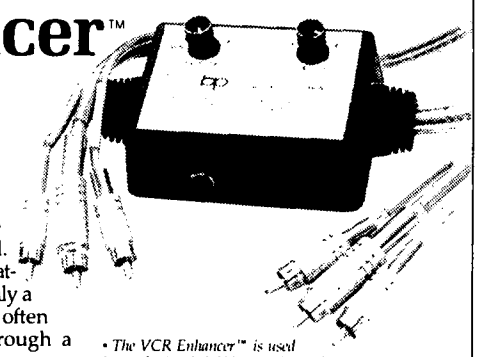

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cast. In order to get the fun under way, however, the film must first ask us to swallow a rather dubious complication: namely, that even though Moramax's corporate headquarters are in New York, the stockholders' meeting is held at the Plaza Hotel, and the Sheltons (who live in Manhattan) spend the night before the meeting in a Plaza suite.

Neither the complexity of the set-up nor the unbelievability of the complications would matter much, of course, if the ensuing sequences were brilliant. But *Big Business* is never as amusing or clever as one would like it to be. In order to be maximally effective, a mistaken-identity comedy must build steadily, sharply, and smoothly; but from the beginning this film is creaky and clumsy, which appears to be rather less the fault of the uneven script by Dori Pierson and Marc Rubel than of Jim Abraham's consistently uninspired, and sometimes even inept, direction. There are laughs, to be sure, but they're scattered, and most of them are occasioned not by terrific mistaken-identity situations but by the two lead actresses' talent for making a great deal out of very little. (Simply by spitting out a single word—"Eurotrash!"—Bette Midler can make one laugh uproariously.) The climactic recognition scene, moreover, is utterly disappointing; and the humor of the final sequence depends altogether too much on the fact that Sadie Ratliff watches "Dynasty"—and it seems ill-advised for a film as thin and cartoonish as this one to refer to (and incorporate a snippet or two from) a TV series which, compared to the film itself, looks realistic and profound.

The two-pairs-of-identical-twins gimmick has an honorable lineage, of course, leading back to Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* (and back beyond that to Plautus). But there are several practical problems with it here. To begin with, Lily Tomlin is celebrated for her ability to transform herself into very different characters; but she can't do that here, because her two Roses must be similar enough to be mistaken for each other. As for Bette Midler, she's best at playing herself—or, more specifically, at playing loud, vulgar, wisecracking, swaggering, street-smart Mae West–type know-it-alls—which works perfectly for Sadie Shelton; but Midler must also play the naive, wide-eyed country girl Sadie Ratliff, a character that doesn't really come off at all. Aside from Sadie Shelton, indeed, none of the film's protagonists seems perfectly in focus; one can't *believe* in all four of these women. And this makes it difficult to apportion one's sympathy in the way the filmmakers would like. (It's impossible, by the way, to isolate one of these four as the film's heroine.)

To be sure, apportionment of sympathy is always a problem when you have an actor playing multiple roles. The late actor Ronald Colman knew this; that's why he insisted that the producer David Selznick not give him both the Charles Darnay and the Sydney Carton roles in *A Tale of Two Cities*, even though the two characters were supposed to resemble one another. As Selznick later said, "I'm glad now that he held out for that, because I think a great deal of the illusion of the picture might have been lost had Colman rescued Colman and had Colman gone to the guillotine so that Colman could go away with Lucy." (If Colman played two roles in *The Prisoner of Zenda*, it was only because there was no conceivable alternative.) *Big Business* has precisely this problem: simply stated, it's hard to feel too emotionally involved when one Sadie knocks the other Sadie down and locks her in a closet.

Another problem here is that at times the film seems to be endorsing certain unpleasant stereotypes. For a while, one suspects that the story will conclude with the revelation that, appearances to the contrary, the two Sadies are—surprise—the real Ratliffs, and the two Roses are the real Sheltons. But no way; it's clear in retrospect that we're supposed to have recognized all along that the two Sadies are born "New Yorkers," in the middle-American "code" sense of the term (meaning, of course, that whenever some middle Americans want to say unpleasant things about Jews without being explicitly anti-Semitic, they speak not about "Jews" but about "New Yorkers").

One thing must be said: it's good to see a movie starring two funny women. Midler and Tomlin are a considerably more promising pair than Midler and Shelley Long (in last year's *Outrageous Fortune*), and one would very much like to see them together again. Yet they would have been well advised, this time around, to have junked the far too elaborate premise of *Big Business*—salvaging, perhaps, the delicious character of Sadie Shelton—and found some other script more worthy of their gifts.

A year ago or so, I remarked in this space upon the profusion of recent comedy-fantasies—such as *All of Me* and *Oh Heavenly Dog*—in which characters found themselves inhabiting bodies other than their own. Since then the trend has escalated. We've had films in which fathers and sons exchange bodies (*Vice Versa*, *Like Father, Like Son*), and even one (*18 Again*) in which a grandfather and grandson change places. And now there's *Big*, in which thirteen-year-old Josh Baskin (David Moscow) wakes up one morning to discover that he's been transformed into a twenty-years-older version of himself (Tom Hanks).

Given the extreme familiarity of its concept—and the fact that it was co-written by Steven Spielberg's sister Anne (with Gary Ross), produced by the insipid James Brooks (of TV comedy and *Broadcast News* fame), and directed by Penny ("Laverne and Shirley") Marshall (most of the members of whose family know more about churning out vapid sitcoms than about making films)—one could be forgiven for not expecting much from *Big*. Surprisingly, however, the film proves to be one of the most delightful comedies in recent memory. And among the most gently moving, too. Superficially it may resemble *Vice Versa* and the like, but it has a deeper affinity to such strange and affecting fairy tales as *Charly* and *Being There*. Both the script and the direction are first-rate, and Tom Hanks, whose talents have rarely seemed more than modest, does an absolutely extraordinary job of convincing one that he is a boy in a man's body. His performance is at once tender and hilarious, full of perfect small touches (e.g., the tentative way he peeks into his underpants after looking in the bathroom mirror and seeing a grown-up); at every turn, the awkwardness, exuberance, and innocence of this boy-man feel exactly on target, never overdone or sentimentalized. Like *Big Business*, to be sure, this is a one-joke film; the difference here is that the joke keeps building, that it builds with wit and perception and sensitivity, and that (for all its ridiculousness) it is on some level taken perfectly seriously: Marshall and company make us believe in, and care about, this character precisely because *they* believe and care about him.

They also make us care about Susan (Elizabeth Perkins), a jaded young businesswoman who, during the course of a most peculiar affair with Josh, gradually learns to be vulnerable, to trust, and to love. Perkins is smart, funny, and often astonishingly touching in this role; an actress of rare expressiveness, she lets us see Susan open up, step by subtle step, like a mimosa leaf, lets us watch her various reactions to Josh—curiosity, perplexity, wariness, amusement, ardor, wonderment—playing across her face, vying for control. It is reported that Perkins was James Brooks's original choice for the Holly Hunter role in *Broadcast News*, and that when he took that part away from her he gave her *Big* as a consolation prize. This revelation only reinforces one's already low opinion of Brooks's taste: Hunter is an arresting if narrow performer, a grating sitcom type; Perkins is incomparably finer, an actress of subtler effects, wider range, lovelier presence. But then Perkins should probably be grateful for Brooks's decision, because *Big* is unquestionably superior to *Broadcast News*. □

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BOOK REVIEWS

CAPOTE: A BIOGRAPHY

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Thomas Mallon

Truman Capote lived most of the last decade of his life as an item on Page Six of the *New York Post*. His terrible misadventures excited much scorn and satisfaction, but to his credit Capote authorized his biographer, Gerald Clarke, to operate with candor, and Clarke has told the sad story of Capote's finish with an unsensational thoroughness befitting the sturdy treatment he gives his beginning (also sad) and middle (productive). Objections will be raised that there is more of the celebrity than the artist in this book, but given the subject, how could it be otherwise? Capote did not, after all, just set out to be a writer; he set out to be an Author.

He was really Truman Streckfus Persons, born in Alabama in 1924 to Lillie Mae Faulk and Arch Persons. Mama drank and had affairs (one with Jack Dempsey) and Daddy was "a born salesman" who dealt mostly in snake oil. One of his promotions was "the Great Pasha, otherwise known as Sam Goldberg from the Bronx. . . . With the help of what was advertised as a secret Egyptian drug, he could retard his heartbeat to such an abnormally slow rate that . . . he could remain alive in an airtight coffin for up to five hours." Arch and Lillie Mae abandoned Truman, leaving him to live with three aging maiden cousins and an unmarried uncle. Old Sook, who would show up in *The Grass Harp* and *A Christmas Memory*, was so shy she seemed simple-minded to some; she read only Grimm's fairy tales and the Bible; made herbal medicines for dropsy; sent Christmas fruitcakes to the Roosevelts; and was addicted to morphine. (Of such things is Southern Lit born.)

Lillie Mae eventually reached New York City, where she married Joseph Capote, a Cuban working successfully on Wall Street. (He would later do a little time in Sing Sing.) Truman was grudgingly called north by his mother, and he spent most of his adolescence in Manhattan and Greenwich, enraging the drunken Lillie Mae with his bravely undisguised effeminacy. Clarke takes an orthodox Freudian view of Truman's tormenting Lillie Mae (who had rechristened herself Nina), and finds it "impossible to dispute his bleak and chilling judgment of his own mother: 'she was the single worst person in my life.' " She would kill herself with Seconal in the early fifties.

Clarke quotes E. B. White's description of *The New Yorker* during World War II: "a worse madhouse than ever now . . . on account of the departure of everybody for the wars, leaving only the senile, the psycho-neurotic, the maimed, the halt, and the goofy to get out the magazine. There is hardly a hormone left in the place . . ." Still, copyboy Truman Capote managed to stand out, sashaying through the corridors, his blond bangs bouncing, ordering in his meals from 21: " 'For God's sake! What's that?' [Harold] Ross himself demanded when he peered out of his office and saw him drifting down the hall." He even managed to lose his job (not an easy task there, then or ever) for offending the dignity of that monstrous false god of American poetry, Robert Frost.

It didn't matter. He would soon launch himself with spooky, gorgeously written short stories in *Harper's Bazaar* and *Mademoiselle*, creating anticipation for his first novel, *Other Voices, Other Rooms*. Its jacket photo—TC in a calculated, Gothic kiddie-porn pose—remains nearly as famous as the book itself, though, as Clarke notes, *Other Voices* contains "the themes that dominate all of Truman's writing: the loneliness that afflicts all but the stupid or insensitive; the sacredness of love, whatever its form; the disappointment that invariably follows high expectation; and the perversion of innocence."

His serious lovers lacked his taste for limelight: Newton Arvin, a fastidious English professor at Smith ("Newton was my Harvard") and, enduringly, Jack Dunphy—angry, reclusive, butch, dignified, and it would seem from this book, something of a horror. At least as important to Capote were his relationships with those Clarke calls the "swans"—rich women like Babe Paley, Slim Keith, Gloria Guinness, and Lee Radziwill—to whom he became confidant, jester, tastemaker, and toy. Some, like Mrs. Paley, were truly exquisite; others, like Princess Lee, were nullities.

Throughout the fifties Capote succeeded with delicate fictions, travel sketches, and personality pieces. (Unwisely stagestruck, he had respectable failures with *The Grass Harp* and *House of Flowers*.) Without really knowing it, he was moving toward his big book, learning to make one eye, the reporter's, work with the second, a novelist's, through a single pair of spectacles. His report on the trip of an American musical company doing *Porgy and Bess* in the Soviet Union (*The Muses Are Heard*, 1956) and an extended interview with deep thinker Marlon Brando read today like warm-ups for *In Cold Blood* (1966), the "nonfiction novel" that told the story of how Perry Smith and Dick Hickock killed the Herbert Clutter family of Holcomb, Kansas, in 1959 and how, five and a half years later, society exacted its retribution.

About that book one wants to use the old advertising slogan "Often Imitated, Never Equalled," because it surely applies. Whether the nonfiction novel was invented by Capote or two hundred and fifty years earlier by Defoe, the point remains that of all the New Journalism produced in the past quarter century *In Cold Blood* achieved a unique level of artistry. So exhausted was Capote from his emotional immersion in the case (he bought the killers' gravestones) that when it was over, and the book was a commercial and critical phenomenon, he was finished. He didn't know it, of course, and the long social bender he embarked on would be interrupted with small achievements here and there, but his talent was prematurely aged, and he would spend what should have been his prime mostly dithering himself to death.

Along with great sums of money and a new apartment in the U.N. Plaza came a level of celebrity he could scarcely have imagined. His Black and White masked ball at the Plaza Hotel in 1966 was the Party of the Century. All the achievers and parasites of our time begged for invitations. It was so glittering that professional killjoys like Pete Hamill had to print scoldings about such things being allowed to occur while there was a war going on; it was also so successful that even Dunphy had a good time. Still, Capote was silly enough to believe that he had accomplished something by it, and in the years of his crazy fame he was prompted to take on such empty projects as turning Lee Radziwill into an actress—an effort whose redundancy eluded him. He became a fixture of the talk-show couch. Suburban millions would gasp, and even take offense, when he first lisped hello to Johnny, but before the next commercial they would decide, rather like the residents of Finney County, Kansas, that the little fellow was so clever he must be all right. Having become famous to the extent only television will permit, he had gotten his wish to astonish. But it was granted with a Midas catch: exposed so widely and frequently, he soon became familiar, almost ordinary, a literary Charo on an upholstered Love Boat.

He was supposed to be in pursuit of an even bigger book than *In Cold Blood*, a novel. Not an elegant little dolls' house like *Breakfast at Tiffany's*

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(Clarke reveals that Holly Golightly was called Connie Gustafson in an early draft); he was going to make a Taj Mahal. The American Proust was what he wanted to be, declaring the ambition repeatedly:

> "A large novel, my magnum opus" was how he described it to Bennett Cerf. "A book about which I must be very silent, so as not to alarm my 'sitters,' and which I think will really arouse you when I outline it (only you must never mention it to a soul). The novel is called 'Answered Prayers'; and, if all goes well, I think it will answer mine."

All went nowhere. For one thing, far from being silent, he did almost nothing but talk about it; and, for another, he remained far more interested in the sitters themselves than any portrait he might produce. (This alone makes him something more like Proust's opposite than successor.) Finally, he forgot the very saying from which he derived the title ("more tears are shed over answered prayers than unanswered prayers"). The little of the book that was published in *Esquire* in the mid-seventies can without much exaggeration be said to have killed him.

The swans recognized themselves dopily dishing their marital secrets—secrets Capote had hardly refracted into anything like art—in the chapter called "La Côte Basque, 1965." Babe would no longer speak to him and Slim Keith ("Lady Ina Coolbirth") turned into an active enemy. It was, says Clarke, a disaster "complete and absolute," over which Capote cried without comprehension. His "boundless and insatiable" need to be loved now had to be filled by a B-team of swans, like Johnny Carson's second ex-wife.

He had nothing else to fall back on. One thing Clarke's book shows is that Capote's mind was engaged only by people, not such a bad thing for a novelist, but rather terrible for a person. Brilliant but shallow, he pursued no culture ("For him Venice was Harry's Bar," said Donald Windham), and he wound up with no intellectual resources for a rainy day. Of his contemporaries—Mailer, Vidal, and Baldwin, that bundle of talent all born around 1925—he has the least claim to the title man of letters. He wrote almost nothing that could be called criticism, because he was one of those people with tastes instead of beliefs.

He made one abortive revival. *Music for Chameleons* (1980) is a disciplined collection of lean stories and sketches, an intriguing sort of notebook from an artist trying to fight his way back. But even it is flawed by "Handcarved Coffins," something that falsely claims to be "A Nonfiction Account of an American Crime," but is more like a parody of *In Cold Blood*, just as Capote's 1970s (sleazing through Studio 54) were a bad-joke version of the real high life he lived in the sixties.

By 1970 his relationship with Dunphy was no longer sexual, and the two of them lived far from each other for months of the year. Capote did not fall into the manic promiscuity of his sometime friend Tennessee Williams; instead, he developed destroying obsessions for two completely unglamorous men: "Danny," an air conditioner repairman separated from his wife; and John O'Shea, a violent alcoholic, married "low-level bank vice president." Clarke is very good on the irony of these last romances. Danny, he says,

> represented all those carefree, freckle-faced Alabama country boys Truman had wished he could have been, mocking him, even if they uttered not a word, with the nonchalant assurance of the absolutely average. In every way Danny stood for the common man: that was his allure. If he had been handsome, had boasted a fine physique, or had been out of the ordinary in any other way, Truman would not have given him a second glance.

He still showed up on talk shows, only drunk, not witty. He was a positive vacuum cleaner for cocaine, and his body, moving from binge to spa, ballooned and deflated like a rubber syringe. "An exact count of his [hospital] stays is hard to come by," Clarke says. During "the first few years of the eighties he was hospitalized in half a dozen states and Switzerland too. But the tally from Southampton Hospital, his favorite, gives an indication of the quickening pace of his decline: he registered there four times in 1981, seven times in 1982, and sixteen times in 1983." He died from either suicide or an accidental overdose—the question is pedantic—in 1984.

This is a well-researched book. There are patches of flat writing and overwriting (the two are really the same thing), but Clarke's prose is generally solid and in a few places memorable: "It was a strange household he entered in Monroeville, unique to the South, peculiar to the time: three quarrelsome sisters in late middle age, their reclusive older brother, and an atmosphere heavy with small secrets and ancient resentments." There are some nice set pieces on 1940s New York and the fashion magazines that gave Capote's fiction its start. I wish Clarke wouldn't first-name everyone (Cerf is "Bennett" and Vidal is "Gore"), but I suppose this is meant to give the reader some sense of how "Truman" operated in the world. For many years that operation was calamitous, and Capote is lucky to have found someone—rather in the way Oscar Wilde eventually found Richard Ellmann—who has been able to make far more sense of his life than he himself did. □

SENATORIAL PRIVILEGE: THE CHAPPAQUIDDICK COVER-UP

Leo Damore/Regnery Gateway/$19.95

Franz M. Oppenheimer

"What? Another book about Chappaquiddick and Teddy Kennedy? Who wants to hear any more about that?" I was asked that question repeatedly when seen with this book, 40,000 copies of which were sold before publication. The answer is that we all ought to hear more about it. Senator Edward Kennedy remains a leading member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and on June 11 he was formally endorsed by the Massachusetts State Democratic Convention as the Democratic party's candidate for yet another term as senator. True, what we already know should alone make that endorsement a scandal. But thanks to the luck and patient detecting of Leo Damore we now know more, and enough to remove the lingering mysteries of that sordid episode.

From Robert Sherrill's masterly *The Last Kennedy*, we knew by 1976 that sometime between 11:30 p.m. and 12:45 a.m. during the night of Friday, July 18, 1969, Senator Kennedy drove his car off a narrow bridge in Chappaquiddick, and that his car, and in it Mary Jo Kopechne, were discovered submerged in Poncha Pond about 8 a.m. the following morning by two fishermen, who reported their discovery by telephone to the police at 8:20 a.m. Senator Kennedy reported the accident to the police about two hours after the fishermen had reported it. He had complained to the night manager at his motel at 2:25 a.m. about noises from a neighboring party; and at about 7:30 a.m. he chatted with some yachting friends on the motel's porch. He was immaculately dressed in "yachting clothes," freshly shaven, nonchalant, and "normal in every way."

Senator Kennedy gave three different and inconsistent accounts of his role in the tragedy: a written account drafted with the help of his friend and lawyer Paul Markham at the police station after reporting the accident, an account that omitted, among many other facts, any mention of the party with Mary Jo Kopechne and five other former members of Robert Kennedy's staff; a television address, given a week later on the same day he pleaded guilty (and thereby avoided cross-examination) to the charge of leaving the scene of an accident without reporting it "after knowingly causing injury to Mary Jo Kopechne"; and secret testimony at an inquest held the following January. The TV speech was the product of a conclave of Kennedy celebrities who were barricaded with their leader incommunicado inside the Kennedy compound at Hyannis Port for a full week after the accident. The chief draftsman was Theodore Sorensen; among the other handmaidens were Richard Goodwin, Arthur Schlesinger, Burke Marshall, and Robert McNamara. The public reaction to the evasions, irrelevancies, and probable falsehoods of the speech was, in Sherrill's words, "a disaster." The *New York Times* commented: "Senator Kennedy was really asking for an outpouring of support on the basis of a partially irrelevant and totally unsatisfactory *ex parte* account." As for Kennedy's third and last story, given at an inquest belatedly held on January 5-8, 1970, the judge found it "probable" that "Kennedy and Kopechne did *not* intend to return to Edgartown at that time; that Kennedy did not intend to drive to the ferry slip and his turn onto Dyke Road was intentional." The judge also found "inconsistencies and contradictions" of testimony too numerous for him to list and "probable cause to believe that Edward M. Kennedy operated his motor vehicle negligently . . . and that such operation appears to have contributed to the death of Mary Jo Kopechne."

Apart from obvious internal contradictions, the untruths of Kennedy's accounts were most convincingly established by a man of unblemished reputation, Christopher Look, a deputy sheriff of Dukes County who testified at the inquest. Look had spotted Kennedy's car at 12:45 a.m. stopped on the road; he left his car and went toward Kennedy's to see whether help was needed, only to see it speed away on the dirt road toward the fatal bridge. Since Kennedy and all other Kennedy witnesses had testified at the inquest that Kennedy and Miss Kopechne had left the party together at about 11:15 p.m., and Kennedy maintained that he had done so in order to drive Miss Kopechne to the ferry, which was only two

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and a half miles away, the discrepancy of time alone knocked every one of Kennedy's inconsistent tales into a cocked hat.

In short, by 1976 at the latest, anyone interested knew that Kennedy was a liar. Thanks to the media and Robert Sherrill's book, anyone interested also knew that Kennedy's lies and conduct remained unpunished in the teeth of Massachusetts law, because of the diabolical efficiency with which the Kennedy apparatus thwarted any normal investigation and prosecution.

There remained, however, many mysteries that have now been solved by Leo Damore. The first was why Kennedy waited ten hours before reporting the accident, a question on which until now we could only speculate. The answer was finally given to Damore by Edward Kennedy's cousin, Joseph Gargan. It was to Gargan that Kennedy first reported the accident when he returned to the party to seek help, having escaped from the submerged car in Poncha Pond. After attempting to rescue Mary Jo, Gargan finally drove Kennedy to the ferry landing, from which Kennedy swam the channel to return to his motel. Gargan, at long last, told Damore that Kennedy had urged Gargan to report the accident, in order not only to avoid that painful chore but to develop another option:

> Kennedy was having alternative ideas about the situation: Why couldn't Mary Jo have been driving the car? Why couldn't she have let him off, and driven to the ferry herself and made a wrong turn?
>
> Kennedy asked to be brought back to the cottage to establish the story. After a while he could leave. Kennedy suggested that when he was back at the Shiretown Inn, Gargan could "discover" the accident and report to police that Mary Jo had been alone in the car. How this was going to be worked out insofar as "details" were concerned, the Senator didn't say.

It is now clear that although "Gargan rejected the idea out of hand," Kennedy did not. Indeed, on the next morning, when Gargan and Markham came to see Kennedy at his motel, fully expecting him to have reported the accident, they found that Kennedy had continued to expect Gargan to make the report. Kennedy said: "I'm going to say that Mary Jo was driving."

This is why, in violation of his promise to Gargan, Kennedy did not report the accident after returning to his motel sometime before 2:25 a.m., why he sought to establish his presence at the motel by complaining about the noise from a party, and why he chatted so nonchalantly with his friends on the porch the next morning.

Another of Damore's major revelations explains how Kennedy could drive off a bridge he knew so well. There had been previous speculation that he had been drunk, but Kennedy testified at the inquest that after drinking "about a third of a beer" with friends before the party, and after a rum and coke at 8 p.m. and one at 9 p.m., he drank nothing at all and drove off the bridge "absolutely sober." By contrast Damore reports that Kennedy, at a regatta victory party on a friend's boat before the Chappaquiddick party, had drunk "three rum and cokes in about twenty minutes." Add those drinks to the later two and sobriety becomes questionable. Mary Jo Kopechne's blood analysis showed an alcohol content of .09 percent (about six drinks), and all witnesses described her as the most abstemious drinker of the group. No one has ever described Ted Kennedy as abstemious. The evidence is virtually conclusive that he was drunk when he drove off the bridge, which under Massachusetts law made him guilty of manslaughter.

In this light, the deputy sheriff's testimony that Kennedy sped away when he saw the sheriff approaching becomes quite plausible: Kennedy did not want to have his presidential aspirations blighted by yet another reckless driving charge. (Besides, Kennedy had no driver's license on him; nor could his license, which had expired months earlier, be found.) Between 11:15 p.m., when he left the party, and 12:45 p.m., when he drove off the bridge, there was plenty of time for more drinking and carrying on.

Damore also sheds new light on the perversion of the investigation that shielded Kennedy. We learn for the first time that, however belatedly, there was a supposedly secret police investigation of the accident before the inquest, and that, in violation of his official duty, State Police Detective Lieutenant Bernie Flynn volunteered to Kennedy's brother-in-law, Stephen Smith, to prepare Kennedy for interrogation at the inquest by briefing him on the results of that investigation. The offer was accepted, and Flynn met secretly once with Kennedy's counsel Herbert J. Miller, formerly assistant attorney general in charge of the criminal division of the Department of Justice in the Kennedy Administration, and another time with Miller and Stephen Smith. At the end of the second briefing a grateful Stephen Smith asked Flynn: "What can I do for you?"

There are many other revelations in this book, for each of which the sources are given meticulously. Yet for all its merit, *Senatorial Privilege* is difficult to read and understand. It is a splendid source book for students, but its presentation is likely to put a strain on the common reader. Still, if the book does no more than stir the conscience of Democrats and Republicans who by action and omission permit an emotional and moral imbecile to serve on the Senate Judiciary Committee (to say nothing of the Senate), it will have rendered a patriotic service. □

FINAL WARNING: THE LEGACY OF CHERNOBYL

Robert Peter Gale and Thomas Hauser/Warner Books/$18.95

Jonathan Cohen

In the spring of 1986, Dr. Robert Peter Gale, a specialist in bone marrow transplants at the UCLA Medical Center, joined a team of Western physicians and scientists asked by the Soviets to assist in the treatment of radiation victims from the Chernobyl nuclear accident. *Final Warning*, told in the first person by Dr. Gale and written with attorney and journalist Thomas Hauser, reads more like two books than one. The first book, comprising the first and last chapters of the larger volume, is a sketchy and misleading sermon on the dangers of nuclear energy that is likely to confuse lay readers looking for lessons from Chernobyl. The second book is Dr. Gale's rather self-impressed account of his role in the mercy mission and fling as a celebrity in the Soviet Union.

The final product here might be consigned to the same shelf with diet books, hospital soap operas, and other unsuccessful stabs at immortality by hambone surgeons and ear, nose, and throat specialists. The seriousness of the subject matter, however, and the emergence in the media of Dr. Gale and other non-authorities as prominent spokesmen on matters of nuclear policy, make bad books like this one important. In press interviews, television panels, and other public discussions of nuclear energy, individuals with genuine credentials and experience are increasingly overlooked in favor of charismatic self-promoters and politically motivated alarmists. Correspondingly, the kinds of misrepresentations and confusions that characterize *Final Warning* have steadily gained currency in the United States and Western Europe over the past two decades, providing impetus for an irrational political movement that lumps all things nuclear into a single object of superstition and dread.

From the start, Gale and Hauser demonstrate that they don't understand what happened at Chernobyl and how it relates to the nuclear technology we use to generate electricity in the United States. In keeping with the book's title, the authors begin by arguing that the Chernobyl accident (from which thirty-one people died) provides a final warning of "how deadly nuclear power can be and how helpless the world is when radiation rages wild." The tone of alarm continues as the reader is told that a nuclear power plant meltdown in the United States would kill 27,000 people and seriously injure another 73,000. The fact that these figures represent a highly dubious, worst-imaginable case that could be expected once in every 100,000 meltdowns (every million years or so) is left unsaid. Similarly, the reader is warned that a single atom of plutonium from the Chernobyl accident could find its way into an American citizen's lungs and eventually cause cancer. Unmentioned is that said atom has about one-quadrillionth of a chance of harming anyone, leaving the citizen much more at risk from asteroid collisions or polar bears escaped from the local zoo.

While frightening people about nuclear power plants in general, the authors seem oblivious to the fact that Soviet RBMK reactors of the kind that exploded at Chernobyl are unstable and uncontained systems, designed to produce plutonium for bombs, and therefore unacceptably dangerous by the standards applied to commercial power plants in America and Western Europe. Because the authors make an illogical leap from their reports on Chernobyl to pronouncements on the dangers of nuclear weapons and calls for the U. S. government to participate in "meaningful arms reduction," one might think they would pay attention to the fact that power and weapons production are part of a single industry in the USSR, but kept separate in the United States. However, they show no awareness of this information and choose not to dwell on the fact that the Chernobyl accident could not happen in a U.S. power plant. Nor do they care

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to address the plain fact that nuclear power as practiced outside the Warsaw pact poses considerably less risk to public health and safety than the alternatives for bulk generation of electricity.

The more successful sections of *Final Warning* steer clear of technical and political matters and dwell instead on Dr. Gale's experience treating gravely injured Soviet firefighters and plant workers, many of whom heroically sacrificed themselves to both ionizing radiation and blistering heat in efforts to put out the fires that followed the accident. Here we see Dr. Gale in an arena where he is technically competent instead of naive, and where the same impulses that drive his concerns about nuclear energy are passionately directed to saving lives. Although most of the critically injured Soviets he treats with experimental bone marrow transplants eventually die, his singlemindedness in affording these heroes their best chance at survival is enough to generate some compelling medical drama. One only wishes for more detail on the prognosis and progress of individual patients, which would allow the reader to get more involved in the story of their treatment.

Dr. Gale's leap from relative obscurity outside of hematology circles to newfound celebrity as the Dr. Kildare of *Pravda* and Soviet TV provides another promising story line. Taken under the wing of Armand Hammer, Gale is presented as a kind of gift to Gorbachev and other party luminaries with whom Hammer cuts his deals, much in the style that other capitalists provide call girls to foreign VIPs. In the company of Hammer, Gale gets to meet with Gorbachev, with U.S. Secretary of State Shultz, with John Denver, and to fly around the world on Hammer's private Boeing 727. A different writer might have found occasion for irony in this sudden leap into circles of power and wealth; but Dr. Gale, unfortunately, comments on the action with the conviction that he has at last reached his rightful level of importance on the world stage. Thus Dr. Gale tells us that "I have as much if not more insight into global affairs than most people," that Secretary Shultz "is one of the few people in the forefront of the Reagan administration whom I regard as a top-notch professional," that the state of Israel deserves to exist, that the Statue of Liberty Centennial Celebration was inappropriately reverent to "sacred ideals," and that he would not consider leaving the Soviet Union "without paying tribute to the victims of Babi Yar." As if these expressions of unabashed self-esteem weren't enough, Dr. Gale also interrupts his narrative to bore the reader over an entire chapter with the details of his utterly banal upbringing in Flatbush, Brooklyn and career at Hobart College where "I did well academically and broadened my intellectual interests, moving beyond science to study philosophy, literature, and other aspects of Western Civilization."

By the time Dr. Gale's work with his patients is finished and he is on a jet back to Los Angeles, the reader is likely to feel that he too is confined on a long journey with a talkative and insufferably self-enamored ass. More significant, however, is that Dr. Gale's grandiosity makes him eager to comment on nuclear issues about which he knows very little, and where he continually confuses his exquisite fears and concerns with practical decisions related to the defense and energy policies of the United States. Nothing short of a role in influencing the most crucial issues of our day will suffice for Dr. Gale, who has appeared in California as a kind of unclothed, ignorant, pop celebrity-emperor for all those committed and committable anti-nuclearists who were put on this earth to save us. □

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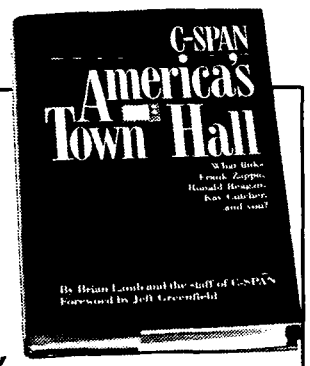

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RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING
Patrick J. Buchanan/Little, Brown/$18.95

David Brooks

As a toddler Patrick J. Buchanan took to correcting his elder brothers as they struggled through their bedtime prayers, a habit that charmed the parents of this precocious little boy. The brothers were less enchanted, and one night the elder Hank maneuvered his crib next to Pat's, jerked Pat's milk bottle from his mouth, and smashed it over his head. Father rushed in and saw blood and milk all over Hank's arm, and a gash across Pat's forehead.

"The lesson never took," the now grown Buchanan writes in *Right From the Beginning*. The memoir, one of the best to emerge from the Reagan Administration, doesn't actually cover the Reagan years; Buchanan is describing mostly his childhood and adolescence here. But it is not apolitical, for Buchanan's life, from toddler to Communications Director, has been all of a piece, and his upbringing explains and exemplifies Reaganism, or at least what many members of the New Right thought Reaganism was supposed to be about.

Buchanan's was a childhood that had its moments of pain, not emotional pain but physical pain. For that reason it was a very happy childhood. Buchanan's parents were devoted to their children to a degree that, by today's standards, is unusual. Patrick was not by any means the only contentious Buchanan, and yet his mother made their home comfortable and stable. His father was a fan of Joe McCarthy and General MacArthur, absolutely dedicated to Catholicism, intensely patriotic—rock-ribbed Republicanism made flesh. "Pop was the personification of loyalty," Patrick recounted in a eulogy last year. "Loyalty to friends, loyalty to family, loyalty to faith; he was the living embodiment of what used to be called the manly virtues."

Mr. Buchanan made his sons hit the punching bag 100 times each night from age seven, empowering them for a lifetime of achievement and steadfastness. And he was strict when they misbehaved, using the strap when necessary. As a result, his children were not timid. Buchanan was a mischievous little kid, and he recounts his adventures with relish. He had a friend whose father had given him a toy cannon, two feet long, that had a roar that could be heard a quarter-mile away, and one day Patrick and company prowled the neighborhood looking for prey. They found it in a hated neighbor dubbed "Evil Eye," who screamed at them through an open window. Patrick's friend wheeled and fired the harmless but loud monster, sending Evil Eye diving for cover. Patrick high-tailed it home, but Evil Eye's phone call was quicker, and father was waiting.

As he grew older Buchanan grew even rowdier. Here is one conservative who did not spend his adolescence reading Russell Kirk. He was listening to popular music, cruising, and drinking beer (about a six pack a night), as he and his gang prowled the streets of Washington. (In those days it was possible to have a normal childhood in D.C., and not have to worry from first grade who was leaking what to David Broder.) Buchanan had a taste for brawling, and he spent a not insignificant portion of his childhood getting arrested. "The truth is," he writes, "we loved to party and drink and fight guys we didn't know and didn't like; and dammit, raising hell at eighteen, nineteen, and twenty can be great, great fun."

Buchanan was arrested for a gas station brawl, for invading Soviet territory (he crashed the Soviet embassy on Sixteenth Street in a stationwagon), and more seriously, for responding in kind when two police officers beat him up. It comes as no surprise when Buchan-

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an reports that he felt a certain affinity for Prince Hal in *Henry IV Part I.*

Patrick hung out with the jocks and the brawlers in high school, but he graduated first in his class from Gonzaga with a 98 average. And Gonzaga was not just any school. It was one of those tough, nakedly competitive Jesuit institutions that served as a particle accelerator for young Catholic men. The stories Buchanan tells of Gonzaga, and his fierce pride in the institution, are reminiscent of the tales you hear in New York about City College in the 1920s and thirties, when that rugged institution was hardening and honing young, mostly Jewish minds.

"The Jesuits were in no doubt as to who they were and what their mission was," Buchanan writes of his teachers at Gonzaga, "and they were unconcerned with our fourteen- and fifteen-year-old opinions as to how we should be educated. We had been sent there to be taught, not to teach; and, from centuries of experience, the Jesuits knew how to educate. To them, the purpose of an open mind was to close on something—and that something was the truth; and faith and tradition taught us what it was."

Secretary of Education William Bennett, by the way, is also a Gonzaga man.

The moral certitude, the toughness, the acknowledgment that pain and suffering are part of a fully lived life—these qualities constitute the basis of Buchanan's politics. Some people you could know for years and unless you "talked issues," you would never know where they stood. But with Buchanan life and politics are inseparable. For Buchanan, and his father, political friends and enemies were determined on the basis of fundamental questions: "Who is the legitimate moral authority in America? Who, by conviction, background, character, and belief, should rightly determine the destiny of the great Republic, and which is the illegitimate usurper, incompetent to identify and protect America's true interests from her real enemies?"

Our politics now have the savagery of religious wars, Buchanan says, because "they are religious wars." On the one side you have the degradation of a Gary Hart: "Caught *in flagrante* violating the traditional moral code, he appealed to the higher morality of this capital city, plaintively asserting he had faithfully refused to take PAC money for his presidential campaign." And on the other side there is Buchanan and the down-to-their-bones conservatives, with their faith in God and the wisdom of the ages.

The fierce dualism of Buchanan and his colleagues on the New Right is something that frightens liberals and makes a lot of us non-New Right conservatives uncomfortable. It is the fierceness of parents protecting their young. The New Right arose as a reaction to liberal social-engineering that threatened the way children were traditionally raised. The New Right's core issues—abortion, prayer in schools, day care, education vouchers—all involve children and child-rearing. Buchanan certainly has other interests, but he seems centrally concerned with preserving a world that will allow people to raise their children in the same manner he was raised. So it is no surprise that Buchanan's explanation of his conservatism should be about the way he was brought up. And it is no surprise that such a childhood memoir should be intensely political (in contrast with, say, Russell Baker's account of his boyhood, which is warm and fun, but signifies little).

The problem with the New Right is that it is hard to convert into it. You pretty much have to have been born into a traditional household to have a fierce interest in preserving its methods of transmitting truths to the young. Conservatives who don't feel that their family structure is under assault tend to be more interested in other issues even though they understand intellectually that, say, education vouchers would indeed be efficient and parents should have a greater voice in raising their kids. Because the New Right is so inaccessible it will remain merely a faction among conservatives, forever neglected by the President it helps elect.

Although many conservatives will feel a cultural divide between Pat Buchanan and themselves, there is one quality in Buchanan which all conservatives should feel at home with. Robust, he is comfortable with tribulation. Buchanan doesn't trivialize suffering or death—his account of his brother's death is extremely moving—but he does distinguish between tragedy and trial.

Many Americans, in their "parenting techniques," and especially in the social programs they endorse, seek to insulate citizens from every conceivable pain from every conceivable source. Buchanan demonstrates that life is diminished, and in the long run damaged, in such a padded world. Not every pain should automatically be replaced with comfort.

Buchanan's conservatism is manly and full of life. This book humanizes him, and teaches lessons not immediately apparent, the way William Buckley's sailing books sneak up and teach you about comradeship. Conservatives fight so hard that we sometimes imagine that they are hard men. *Right From the Beginning* reminds us otherwise. □

HOW TO MAKE MONEY IN STOCKS: A WINNING SYSTEM IN GOOD TIMES OR BAD

William J. O'Neil/McGraw-Hill/$19.95

Joe Mysak

Are you kidding? This is not the book to read on the train home from a day on Wall Street in the company of the shell-shocked, cynical, and sometimes besotted, who, having weathered the October Crash, are reeling every time a double-digit merchandise trade deficit comes out, and the Dow drops 100 points.

Such men might well remember the wise man who wrote, "The most powerful investment returns are stable, compounded returns. . . . What you keep after taxes is more important than what you earn . . . minimize risk . . ." The wise man was writing about buying municipal bonds.

Still, as author William J. O'Neil says, every bear market has been chased by a bull market that has soared to new highs, and there is money to be made. Mr. O'Neil, who runs an investment advisory firm and is founder of *Investor's Daily* newspaper, does not buy the smug pessimism of bond men. "Don't be thrown off by the swarm of gloom and doomers. In the long run, they have seldom made anyone any money or provided any real happiness. I have also never met a successful pessimist."

In *How to Make Money in Stocks*, subtitled "A Winning System in Good Times or Bad," Mr. O'Neil presents his formula for success in the market "whether you've got $500 or $50,000 to invest." The formula falls under the acronym C-A-N S-L-I-M, which more or less stands for examining current quarterly earnings per share; annual growth in earnings; new products, new management, and new highs in price; shares of common stock outstanding; finding out whether your stock leads or lags the market; making sure it has some institutional sponsorship; and determining market direction.

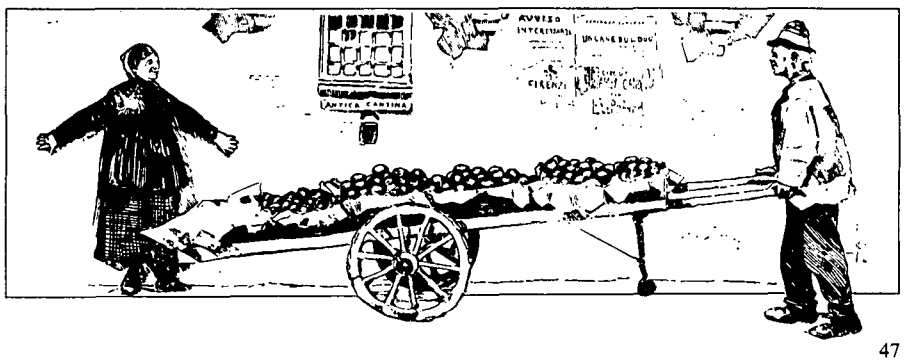
Boiled down even further, Mr. O'Neil's formula is: "Don't dabble in stocks. Dig in and do some detective work." The amount of detective work he dictates is not for the faint-hearted. Nor, I think, is it for the "little guy," the typical Ralph Kramden kind of investor who buys on tips from friends. The little guy rarely wants to make the commitment of time and effort, or has the single-minded determination that Mr. O'Neil recommends, to "make money in stocks." Success, Mr. O'Neil believes, is invariably tied to perseverance and fortitude, and a little luck. His very good advice comprises a mixture of three parts common sense and one part technical knowledge.

He has two main themes. He inveighs against the niggling cheapness that is the obsession of so many little guys. And he excoriates the egomaniacs who insist on fighting the market. Mr. O'Neil tells his readers to buy the best performers in a stock group, and to buy at the market, and not quibble over eighths and quarters of a point. And he tells them not to go bottom fishing for bargains: if a stock is cheap, there's a good reason for it.

He also understands that penny wisdom infects big institutions, which should know better but instead often try to skimp on management fees. "The better money managers will earn the extra one-quarter or one-half of 1 percent, 10 or 20 times over. The last thing you want is cheap advice in the stock market. If you were going to have open heart surgery, would you select the doctor who would do it for the absolutely cheapest fee?" Yet investors, institutional and otherwise, are all too prone to sudden overwhelming anxiety attacks of cheapness. And they usually pay dearly for it.

Mr. O'Neil advises his readers not to

Joe Mysak is assistant managing editor of the daily Bond Buyer *and* TAS*'s chief saloon correspondent.*



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fight the market, and to learn to cut their losses early. "The whole secret to winning in the stock market is to lose the least amount possible when you're not right," he notes, the point when you're not right being reached when the stock drops below the investor's purchase price. Once again, however, the average investor, whether for reasons of pride or penury, hangs on to his losers, to salvage his ego or *save on brokerage commissions.* This seems outrageous, and imbecilic, yet there is the fact.

The average investor, at the same time he hangs on to his losers, will sell his winners early and take small gains. Or he may wait until it is too late, hoping for the big kill. The stock market is not the place to get rich quick, writes Mr. O'Neil—a lesson lost on the Ralph Kramdens, who hear largely apocryphal tales of the magical riches to be made, and swallow them whole.

While imparting the common-sense approach to stock market investing, Mr. O'Neil takes shots at some worthy targets. He discounts Wall Street research reports, almost all of which tell the investor to buy or hold, when selling would be the timely thing to do. And he disparages the price-to-earnings ratio method of selecting stocks, noting that the investor who always sought out low p/e ratio stocks would miss some pretty fair performers.

Mr. O'Neil, a confirmed stock man, will have nothing to do with tax-exempt securities or tax shelters. "The investment decision should always be considered first and tax considerations made a distant second," he writes. "Learn how to make a net profit, and when you do, be happy about it, rather than complaining about having to pay tax because you made a profit." If you want to buy tax-exempt or corporate bonds, what are you doing reading this book?

Mr. O'Neil offers advice on judging market direction, and a foolproof guide. "In the past, it frequently marked the beginning of bear markets and impending recessions when the discount rate was increased three times in succession, and it usually signalled the end of a bear market when the discount rate was finally lowered."

He also advises the investor to buy only a few stocks. Put your eggs in a few baskets (if you have $20,000 to $100,000 to invest, this translates to four or five stocks), and watch those baskets closely. "The more you diversify, the less you know about any one area," he writes. He also believes in the "cousin stock" theory. A group that is doing well—for example, plane manufacturers—is likely to have several distinctive supply companies, such as the company that makes chemical toilets for jets, and these are likely to enjoy increased sales and handsome earnings.

The three parts of common-sense advice Mr. O'Neil dispenses can be mastered easily enough. But the real work is the one part technical research. To help the neophyte along, the author produces two excellent chapters, one on reading charts, which provide the heartbeat history of companies' past stock price performance, and one on reading the daily financial news pages.

Chartists are not without their critics, who contend that examining charts is the same as reading chicken entrails, and that no real patterns can be discerned. Mr. O'Neil answers them summarily: "Charts record and represent pure facts on thousands of stocks. . . . Facts on markets are much more reliable than 98 percent of the personal opinions and academic theories circulating about the stock market today." He continues: "Price patterns are certainly not Ouija-board magic fakery. Professionals who scoff at, or do not believe in, such important tools are openly confessing their total ignorance of the use of modern sophisticated measurement and timing mechanisms."

With just a little practice, you too will be able to recognize a double-bottom, a high and tight flag, and cup-with-a-handle price patterns. After his revealing description of how to read charts, and what they mean, Mr. O'Neil steps back and offers a caveat that they might not be of much use during bear markets when it's selling time. But at the very least, charts provide quick answers to questions about earnings, prices, book value, and shares outstanding.

Mr. O'Neil's chapter on how to read and what to look for in the financial news pages is instructive, although he consistently boosts and cites his own paper, *Investor's Daily.* And why not? The fact is, the paper contains the kinds of specialty tabular and graphic stock market material unavailable elsewhere, which he considers essential for professional equity investing. The tone might be self-serving, but the substance is accurate.

How to Make Money in Stocks is, finally, a work nothing like its title suggests. There is nothing here for the schemer, or for those who seek shortcuts and who abjure hard work. Mr. O'Neil is didactic, and at times entertaining, taking some nice patriotic jabs at politicians and the press. But he is never misleading about what it will take to get the reader to the finish line, and obviously believes Lincoln's dictum, "Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any one thing." □

CORRESPONDENCE

(continued from page 7)

just a minute. Would not twenty years not be "in this century"? Perhaps Barnes and I are not so far apart after all. Yet, if so, what is this about us visionary conservatives not being able to govern? For is not setting the future agenda the supreme art of governance?

—Donald J. Devine
President
Donald Devine Company
Alexandria, Virginia

Fred Barnes is a political analyst whose writings I normally find enriching. Unfortunately, his article "Why Can't Conservatives Govern?" shows a serious lack of understanding about the conservative movement as a whole.

Barnes dismisses Don Devine's efforts to promulgate a conservative agenda in the post-Reagan era as "nuts" and "a lost cause." He argues that "any conservative goal that wasn't achieved by Reagan isn't achievable" and proceeds to offer four pieces of advice to the movement.

But the advice Mr. Barnes gives is as flawed as the premise from which these suggestions arise. Mr. Barnes implies the Reagan Administration did all in its power to implement the campaign promises of 1980 and 1984, but the American public, while embracing some aspects of this agenda, has rejected others. To borrow a phrase, this is nuts. The Reagan Administration has done frightfully little to implement a number of key aspects of the Reagan revolution; in fact, in the past four years it has done virtually nothing. The Reagan Administration has given only lip service to some domestic policy issues (balanced federal budget, line item veto, abortion, prayer in schools) while embracing policies that were contrary to the campaign promises (support of the Department of Education, the Legal Services Corporation, the creation of new cabinet-level bureaucracies, tax increases, to name but a few).

What Mr. Barnes is suggesting, then, is that because the Reagan Administration failed to fight, the conservative movement should declare defeat, and his four suggestions prescribe just that. First, because "the American people don't want sharply reduced government" we should embrace the status quo in Washington. Does Mr. Barnes really believe the American people are comfortable with the bureaucratic mess otherwise known as the federal government? Or, as a 49-state landslide victory in '84 would suggest, is the public demanding the changes candidate Ronald Reagan proposed but did not enact? In truth, we conservatives have an obligation to continue the fight for a limited role in the federal government and the fiscal responsibility it so sorely lacks.

Then, Mr. Barnes urges the right to "like government work and get along with bureaucrats." He is correct that "liberals regard government work as an end in itself" and will control those bureaucracies ignored by conservatives. But if conservatives are to be truthful to their convictions, they must dedicate themselves to *confront* a powerful and deeply entrenched liberal bureaucracy that will fight them—viciously—at every turn. What better example is there than the noble efforts of Mr. Devine when he headed the Office of Personnel Management?

Third, Mr. Barnes urges conservatives to "pick out programs that work and champion them." Politically, this may be wise, but it is just as politically dangerous to ignore the horrific problems at the federal level. Had Ronald Reagan more aggressively combated the bloated, deficit-ridden federal government, today he could convincingly blame the left for these problems. But his administration instead pursued a course of appeasement in order to "get along with bureaucrats," and must now take its share of responsibility for the massive federal deficit. And George Bush may well be defeated in November as a result.

Finally, Mr. Barnes urges conservatives to embrace "big spending programs so long as they are for an indisputably good cause." This vague idea is acceptable only on two conditions. First, like the space program, they must be limited to those worthy ventures which cannot be funded by the private sector; by the same token, that which can be returned to the private sector through privatization should be embraced. Second, conservatives should champion new social spending initiatives only if they result in taking recipients off welfare rolls and into the private sector. Jack Kemp's Enterprise Zones is such a program.

The agenda Mr. Barnes is proposing is contrary to the basic principles of the conservative movement and for that reason alone should be rejected. But if that's not enough, it is also a prescription for political disaster. He proposes precisely what liberal Democrats continuously promise on the campaign trail, and leads to the inevitable question of which party can deliver more pork. At that point we conservatives will be following the liberals' agenda, and history shows they win every time.

—L. Brent Bozell III
Executive Director
Conservative Victory Committee
Alexandria, Virginia

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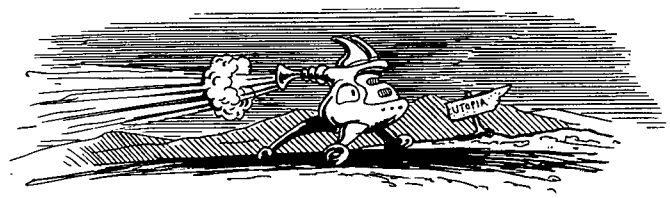


ANOMALIES

by Benjamin J. Stein

Anomalies that could be ironed out. Inconsistencies that could be made consistent. Because my own life is a wild jack-in-the-box of confusion and surprises that I spring on myself to scare myself in the middle of the night, I dwell upon how I might be able to make things right outside my own life, in the world I cannot control.

Take the writers' strike now going on here in Los Angeles, for example. Most of the income of prime time TV comes from situation comedies, and the writers of those shows are on strike. Ergo, no sitcoms for the new fall season.

Now here is an opportunity to straighten out some inconsistencies. I have been both a lawyer and a situation comedy writer. What I notice is this: with a few exceptions, situation comedy writers are not particularly funny people. However, they are intelligent men and women, and they have a keen sense of social justice and outrage about any tilt against perfect law in every circumstance.

On the other hand, the very funniest people I have ever met in terms of wit and irony and articulation have been lawyers and economists. When I practiced law at the Federal Trade Commission fifteen years ago, every day was a riot of biting, memorable humor by my colleagues against each other and against the world. When I worked before and after that time as an economist and analyst of corporate deals, I encountered some of the funniest men and women on earth. Just a standard securities "disclosure" form is one of the funniest written documents man can create.

Here's my idea: in order to avoid depriving America of the situation comedies we need to keep ourselves free, how about lawyers and economists switching with the writers until the strike gets resolved? That is, why not have the comedy writers argue cases and the lawyers and economists write the situation comedies?

In every sitcom ever written, things turn out all right in the end. No one can say the same about litigation. But what if comedy writers handled the cases? Possibly every sort of litigation would be resolved within a half hour, and it would all turn out with that special "golden moment" at the end that brings a tear of recognition that humans are basically good after all.

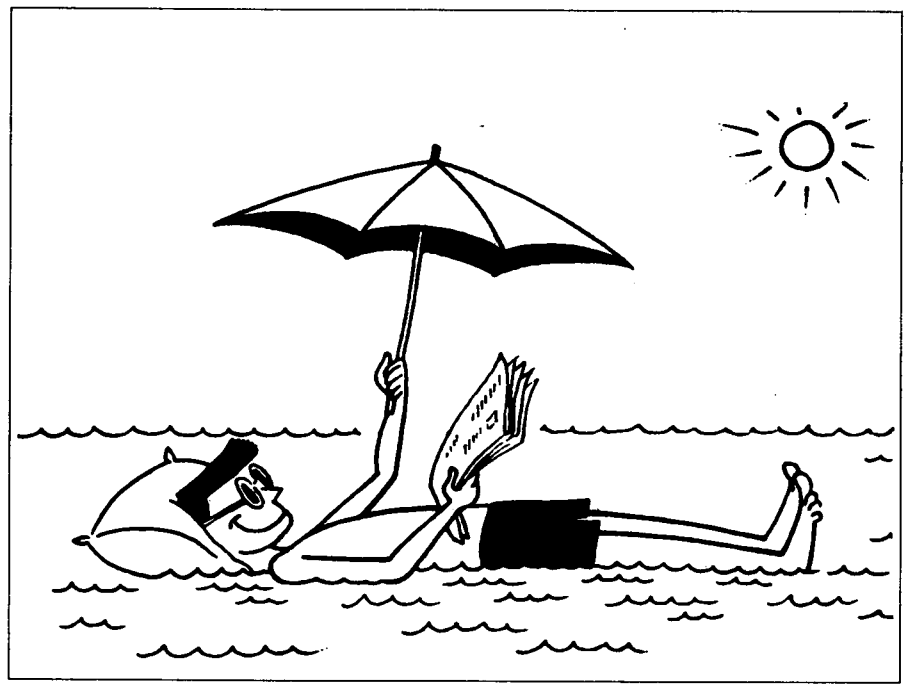
What if lawyers and economists wrote the sitcoms? Very likely, they would turn out so that they more closely approximated the agony and the pain of real life, which is really so frightening that it simply has to be funny. Imagine, for example, a sitcom written by divorce lawyers.

Or what if sitcoms were written by the same economists who predicted that cutting taxes would lower the federal deficit? What if they were "inked" by the same lawyers who write corporate by-laws indemnifying corporate officers for theft from their own stockholders with money taken from those same stockholders? What writer in his cotton sweater and Porsche could ever think of something so funny—and yet so perfectly real and true to life?

Frankly, neither the handling of litigation nor the writing of sitcoms can get much worse. Conceivably, they could get a lot better. At least while the strike is on, and America's video throat is parched, let's try it. Let's put it on the showroom floor and see who slams its doors.

On a completely different, but conceptually related problem, what about noise? Look at it this way. I as a human being am not allowed just to walk into my next door neighbor's house, or the house across the canyon, and start playing my ghetto blaster or bang on the walls of his house.

But, and this is a big but, I can turn up my new, super-powerful stereo so loud that it shakes the walls of houses half a mile away. I don't do it, of course, but my neighbors do it to me all the time. I am assaulted by their noise more or less constantly and endlessly. My family, and every civilized family I know, are prisoners in our own homes. We have to lock ourselves in behind closed windows and the hum of air-conditioning no matter how beautiful the day outside. A man could be arrested for walking into my house and banging on my head. I also might shoot him. But the same man in a convertible can ride by with enough decibel power over his stereo to blow me out of my chair, and he is immune, scot-free to do it to the next person on the road.



Does this make even a little bit of sense? Any sense at all? How about a simple rule that makes it a felony to make noise in a way that escapes beyond your immediate vicinity? Why not treat noise the way we would treat noxious smoke? Why not? Huh?

Here in California, as in most of the nation, we face severe drought. Any day's TV news shows farmers balefully kicking their dry dead topsoil as their crops and herds wither and die in the background. But you would never know it from life in Los Angeles.

Unlike most parts of America, where teenage children or husbands do yard work, in Los Angeles it is all done by hired gardeners. It is simply unheard of for an Angeleno at middle-class status or above to cut his own grass or trim his own hedge.

The gardeners, usually perfectly polite and amiable people, have as one of their tasks the movement of leaves and dead twigs from their client's lawn, driveway, or sidewalk.

The gardeners accomplish this trick not by raking. No, far from it. Even now, in the wildest moments of drought, they attach high pressure nozzles to garden hoses and turn on fire-company strength streams of water to move a leaf one foot from the client's lawn to the next door neighbor's lawn. Then the gardener of the next door neighbor does the same thing. In the end, tens of thousands of gallons of water are used to move one leaf a few doors down. I suspect that if a North Dakota farmer saw what our gardeners do with water here in Los Angeles, he would take out a shotgun.

This level of waste is simply incredible and horrifying in a drought year. Can we stop it? Of course. Do our elected representatives make any move to stop it? Dumbesillah. □

Ben Stein lives in Hollywood. His latest book, Hollywood Nights: The Diary of a Mad Screenwriter, *has just been published by Bantam.*

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For more serious offenses than pranks like these, I was whipped with a spirea or peach switch. At the age of four, my first such punishment was for taking a penny out of the Sunday School collection plate instead of giving my offering. So unforgettable was the experience that I've never stolen anything since. A few years later I got a switching for shooting my sister Gloria in her behind with my BB gun, and another time for hiding in my tree house, refusing to answer Daddy's calls, and pretending that I had run away from home. The few whippings from him—perhaps half a dozen in all—were truly memorable events. I admit now that I deserved them, but at the time I resented the severity of the punishment.

[From An Outdoor Journal, *by Jimmy Carter, Bantam Books, $18.95]*

Philadelphia Daily News

Ethnic soap opera from the city of Brotherly Love:

A headline on one of your news stories has greatly disturbed me.

What comes to mind immediately, when you read in bold print: "Florida State Greeks Suspended in Frat House Rape Probe"? Right! That's exactly what I understood until I read the entire article, and not a single Greek name was mentioned.

I called and asked for an explanation and was given the excuse that this is how fraternities are known, as "The Greeks."

This is ignorant, malicious, in very poor taste, vulgar in nature, bottom-of-the-barrel reporting and a thoughtless splurge of sensationalism which gives the opportunists the chance to exploit a definitely misleading comment. What makes matters even worse is the fact that it appeared right before the primaries. This is nothing short of slanderous!

You owe the Greek Community here a retraction and an explanation that you were refering [sic] to Greek letters and not to individuals of Greek descent but members of the fraternity.

—Bessie Sarris
Philadelphia

Editor's Note: On many campuses, fraternities are known as 'Greeks' because they have Greek-letter names. Nevertheless, the headline was, indeed, insensitive.

[June 1, 1988]

Patriot-News
(Harrisburg, Pennsylvania)

Dr. Ralph Abernathy addressing 200 students at Dickinson College, apparently without notes:

"Martin Luther King Jr. will probably go down in history as being the most significant personality who not only lived during the 20th century, but who has lived throughout the centuries of the history of mankind," Abernathy said.

[March 4, 1988]

Times Record
(Brunswick, Maine)

In the correspondence section of a great local gazette, Herschel from Brunswick sounds like Michael Dukakis's future secretary of state:

Does Public Broadcasting deserve your support? After watching the MacNeil-Lehrer Report on Tuesday, Feb. 2, the night before the vote on Contra aid, I became convinced that PBS is nothing more than a public platform for right wing murderers. They started with a supposedly "even-handed" report from Nicaragua, interviewing at considerable length a large cattle rancher, a right wing member of Congress and a conservative American priest . . . all speaking English. They then had 10 seconds with a low-level Sandinista official speaking Spanish. Not one word from a peasant or a worker or an American from Witness for Peace.

This was followed by an interview with that sublime idiot, Olympia Snowe, and some throwback Democrat from Oklahoma who kept repeating that they had to "keep military pressure on the Sandinistas," which we all know is an excuse for the Contras to use children and women for target practice. Not a word for compassion. Not a word for peace. Not a syllable for reconciliation. Not from Olympia, not from the rancher, not from the stupid Democrat, not from the Nicaraguan congressman and absolutely nothing from the priest. And all this just before the Contra aid vote.

I for one have had it with PBS. I'll not give them another penny for the perpetuation of fascism in America. They can keep their Buckleys and McLaughlins and McNeil-Lehrers. When they get some humane and objective journalists, maybe I'll come back.

—Herschel Sternlieb
Brunswick

[February 11, 1988]

Nation

Christabel Hitchens covers the art scene for the armed camp what reads the *Nation*:

All across the District of Columbia, in these waning days of the most corrupt and brainless Administration in not-so-recent history, you may find members of the Third Generation. This is the self-designation of a group of young people, too tender in years to remember the Goldwater campaign or the Vietnam War, who came to Washington in the footsteps of Ronald Reagan. They populate the better-healed right-wing think tanks and the Congressional offices of men like Jim Courter and Henry Hyde. They show up for Heritage Foundation lunches and "Ollie North: American Hero" soirees. Some of them, like Gregory Fossedal, have made themselves a name in boondoggle campaigns like S.D.I., all the while declaiming against the gross public sector. Others provide a sycophantic audience to laugh at the daring of R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr. when he uses the word "fuliginous" in *The American Spectator* to describe the country's largest minority.

[May 14, 1988]

Daily Californian

Another learned University of California psychopath clears up an old misconception by simple deduction and perhaps a few doses of LSD:

The ancient myth of Noah and the ark, about a worldwide flood that destroys the earth and begins the human race anew, evolved from male envy of female reproduction abilities, according to a UC Berkeley professor.

The Genesis flood myth is only one of 1,000 stories that relate to the world's destruction by mass flooding, said Alan Dundes, professor of anthroology [sic] and folklore and editor of a new book titled "The Flood Myth."

These stories are similar in the sense that they all use floods as a symbol for urination—the male substitution for the female's amniotic fluid that is produced before the birth of a child, he added.

Dundes said "men have for centuries had tremendous envy toward women for their ability to re-create." Therefore, by creating the flood myth, men can portray themselves as true procreators of mankind, he said.

[June 10, 1988]

Santa Barbara News-Press

Philosophical ramblings occasioned by Mrs. Michael ("Kitty") Dukakis, alight and unmoved by enlightened Santa Barbara's prohibition against Demon Tobacco:

Thanks to Barney Brantingham's column on May 29 ("Mrs. Dukakis blows smoke in county's face"), we have been given some insight into the attitudes held by our prospective first lady. Clearly, Kitty Dukakis seems rather arrogant in her disrespect for our local non-smoking ordinances.

The larger issue here goes beyond a mere violation of law and speaks to apparent insensitivities expressed by Mrs. Dukakis. We Santa Barbarans are fiercely protective of all aspects of our environment, from clean water to the right not to be exposed to another person's cigarette exhaust. We pride ourselves on being a friendly town that eagerly rolls out the red carpet to all of our visiting dignitaries and VIPs. Kitty Dukakis and her gang have muddied that red carpet and smudged our pride by her selfish and inconsiderate actions in the County Administration Building.

Even the homeless contingent Mrs. Dukakis arrived to exploit had the decency to confine its mushroom cloud to the outdoors.

As we have seen recently, the behind-the-scenes activities of a first lady can often embarrassingly overshadow the national agenda.

Is this the kind of personality we would like to see residing in our White House? Perhaps a closer look should be taken at Kitty and Mike's words and actions before we mark our ballots next November.

—Maurice J. Kane
Tom Campbell
Santa Barbara

[June 15, 1988]

Spy

The humor magazine of the urban sophisticates serves up still more hilarious commentary for its knee-slapping readers and quite possibly the residents of many of America's finest morgues:

So, despite the few remaining plebiscites (yes, California, we really really *do* care), it's all over but the shouting. And the cynical deal cutting. And the pandering to Jesse Jackson. And the rewriting of the Mario Cuomo profiles. *President* Michael Dukakis? He suggests more a very, very competent internist (or college admissions director, maybe) than a commander-in-chief. *President* Al Gore? The *faux* conservatism is almost unforgivably transparent. *President* George Bush? Well, hey, *sure*—and why not President McLean Stevenson and . . . oh, President Conrad Bain and President Hal Holbrook, while we're at it? *They're* ineffectual white men; *they're* 60-ish; *they're* friendly; *they're* good-looking.

[May 1988]

Black/Out

More trouble for the Melting Pot, as reported in "the magazine of the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays":

There are those who say that the urge to have children is a sign of encroaching despair, a last desperate outcry before the leap into darkness. I disagree. I believe that raising children is one way of participating in the future, in social change. On the other hand, it would be dangerous as well as sentimental to believe that child rearing alone is enough to bring about a livable future. For unless we develop some cohesive vision of the world in which we hope these children will participate, and some sense of our own responsibilities in shaping that world, we will only raise new performers in the masters' sorry drama.

So what does all this have to do with lesbian parenting? Well, when I talk about mothering, I do so with an urgency born of my consciousness as a lesbian and a black African Caribbean American woman staked out in white, racist, sexist, homophobic America.

[Vol.7, No. 314]

Washington Post

The Queen's English put to elegant effect by another astonishing Hollywood intellectual:

"Poltergeist" star Zelda Rubinstein, who has been performing at the Arena Stage in "The Cherry Orchard," slipped quietly out to suburban Virginia Friday to see "Poltergeist III." . . . Rubinstein, who plays the eccentric clairvoyant who battles the spooky apparitions in the "Poltergeist" films, said it was also her first time seeing Heather O'Rourke since the child actor died Feb. 1.

"It was real painful for me," Rubinstein explained. "I loved that child. I met her when she was 5, and she was 12 when she terminated."

[June 14, 1988]

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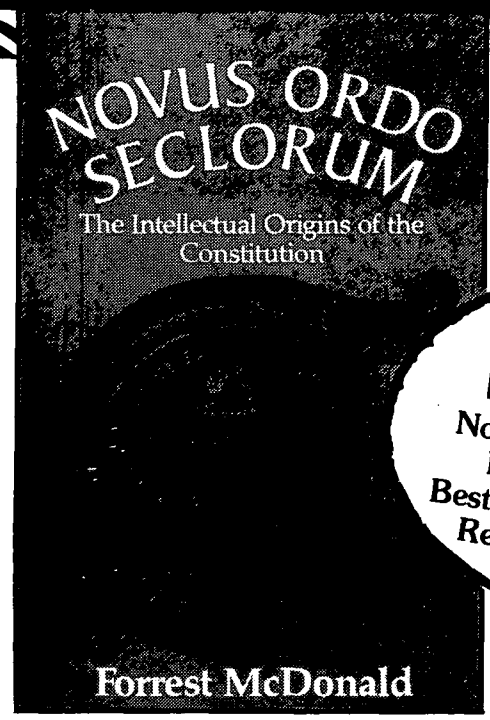

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